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An essay on the local or lay
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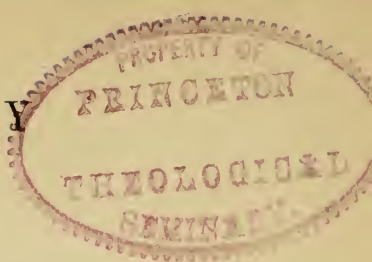
THE

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AN ESSAY

ON THE



LOCAL OR LAY MINISTRY,

AS EXERCISED IN

THE WESLEYAN AND OTHER BRANCHES OF THE
METHODIST FAMILY.

"Take heed unto thyself, and unto the doctrine; continue in them: for
in doing this thou shalt both save thyself and them that hear thee."—
1 Tim. iv. 16.

By RICHARD MILLS,

WESLEYAN LOCAL PREACHER, RUGELEY, STAFFORDSHIRE.

LONDON:

JOHN KAYE AND CO., 80, FLEET-STREET.

1851.

ROYAL SOCIETY OF MEDICINE

1891

THE JOURNAL OF THE

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AN ESSAY

ON

The Local or Lay Ministry.



PREFACE.

THE Essay which is now presented to the world, owes its paternity to the generosity of John Kaye, Esq., of Dalton Hall, near Huddersfield. In the course of last year (1849), Mr. Kaye offered for competition two prizes, the one of fifty pounds, and the other of twenty-five pounds, for two Essays on the Methodist Local Ministry ; to be written exclusively by Local Preachers, and to embrace the several topics which are discussed in the following pages.

It is well known, that, within the last few years, a number of Prize Essays have been added to the religious literature of this country. These Essays, which embrace subjects of the highest conceivable interest and importance, and combine the loftiest talent with the deepest piety, are the legitimate offspring of British benevolence. Several of the Essays have emanated from the mental recesses of the pious and erudite principal of Cheshunt College, and are deservedly entitled to a place of distinction in the public estimation.

In a country like this, where social and religious creeds are unfettered by national restrictions, it is easy to conceive, that, without the application of strong moral counterchecks, the wildest opinions might be generated and diffused under the sanction and authority of legal toleration.

It would, in many instances, be extremely difficult to deal forensically with infidelity in many of its modifications, however mischievous it might be in its design or influence, unless it assumed a tangible opposition to, or a violation of, constitutional principles ; and even then, to visit moral evils with judicial penalties might be a very questionable policy. If it would not be fighting with symptoms rather than with the disease, it would certainly be dealing with the effect rather than with the cause. The well-known aphorism, "Prevention is better than cure," is a maxim founded in sound policy ; and those individuals who apply the principle it involves, with any degree of practical effect, are deservedly entitled to be classed among the truest benefactors of mankind.

It is to this principle, in its best acceptation, that our nation owes the numerous Prize Essays, which, under the charm of literary attraction, have brought out in prominent relief some of the most important collateral branches of the New Testament economy.

The importance of these special means may at once be found in their acknowledged necessity. With all the moral and

ADVERTISEMENT.

TOWARDS the close of the year 1849, at a time when attention was drawn to the claims and position of Wesleyan Local Preachers, by the then proposed establishment of a Mutual-Aid Association, the following announcement appeared :—

“The Proprietor of THE WESLEYAN TIMES offers two prizes, of fifty pounds and twenty-five pounds respectively, for the two best Essays on the Local or Lay Ministry, as existing in the Wesleyan and other branches of the Methodist family. The Essays should exhibit the Scriptural character of a Lay Ministry, and its employment in Apostolic times ; trace its use in subsequent ages of the Church ; and point out the providential circumstances which led to its introduction in Methodism. They should also embrace an inquiry into its adaptation to the spiritual wants of an unconverted world ; exhibit its past success and present position ; and furnish suggestions for its future and more extended usefulness. Any Methodist Local Preacher (Wesleyan or otherwise) will be eligible to compete for the prizes.

The Essays should extend to from 250 to 300 pages of 300 words ; and should be sent, under cover, to the Editor of THE WESLEYAN TIMES not later than the 1st of February, 1850."

The period so fixed was afterwards, by special request, considerably extended, to afford time to those whose circumstances restrict their opportunities for literary composition.

Eventually about thirty-six Essays were sent in. Most of them were of a superior order ; some of them surprisingly so, when it is considered that they were the productions of men who labour with their hands for the bread that perisheth. One of them, and not the least valuable, was from the pen of a miner in one of the Northern collieries. After a careful perusal of the whole, the prizes were awarded to Mr. R. MILLS, of Colton-hall, near Rugeley ; and Mr. J. H. CARR, of Leeds. To the former, £50 ; and to the latter, £25.

JABEZ BURNS, D.D.,	} Adjudicators.
JOHN HARRISON,	

oblivion, he will fall back with some consolation on the elevated sentiment of the poet—

“In generous deeds 'tis noble even to fail.”

The Author has offered a few strictures on one or two departments of the polity of Methodism, which, he conceives, operate adversely on the body of Local Preachers, and injuriously on the general interests of the Connexion. He has not, however, in a single instance, ventured within the sacred enclosure of private character. Indeed, he conceives that the private character of the preachers generally is unassailable ; but, as public acts are public property, and are open to commendation or rebuke, according to their obvious character and probable tendency, he hopes, in the remarks he has made, he shall not be charged with having trespassed beyond the legitimate bounds of privilege to which the laws of authorship give unquestionable claim.

*Colton-hall, near Rugeley,
April 1st, 1850.*



The first of these is the fact that the system of
 the world is not a simple one, but a complex one.

The second is the fact that the system of the world is not a static one, but a dynamic one.

The third is the fact that the system of the world is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one.

The fourth is the fact that the system of the world is not a uniform one, but a varied one.

The fifth is the fact that the system of the world is not a simple one, but a complex one.

The sixth is the fact that the system of the world is not a static one, but a dynamic one.

The seventh is the fact that the system of the world is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one.

The eighth is the fact that the system of the world is not a uniform one, but a varied one.

The ninth is the fact that the system of the world is not a simple one, but a complex one.

The tenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a static one, but a dynamic one.

The eleventh is the fact that the system of the world is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one.

The twelfth is the fact that the system of the world is not a uniform one, but a varied one.

The thirteenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a simple one, but a complex one.

The fourteenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a static one, but a dynamic one.

The fifteenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one.

The sixteenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a uniform one, but a varied one.

The seventeenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a simple one, but a complex one.

The eighteenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a static one, but a dynamic one.

The nineteenth is the fact that the system of the world is not a homogeneous one, but a heterogeneous one.

The twentieth is the fact that the system of the world is not a uniform one, but a varied one.

social advantages which we pre-eminently enjoy in this age and country, it cannot be concealed that the present period is distinguished by an extraordinary development of irreligion, in forms the most specious and attractive. No one who has paid much attention to past and passing events, can be blind to the fact, that a powerful anti-Christian influence, under various forms and operating in various ways, has been diffused over a large surface of society, through the medium of one department of the press ; which, actuated by mercenary or less reputable motives, is prostituting its talents, and wasting its energies, by publishing and circulating, in every accessible quarter, the principles of infidelity, under the most insidious and dangerous modifications. The progress of general information through the innumerable channels which are now accessible to all classes of the community, has fearfully increased the bold and daring spirit of the times. Many of the cheap publications which inundate our land, pander to the worst passions of the human heart, and destructively counteract all measures of moral and religious improvement. That we live in times of great enlightenment, teeming with advantages of various kinds, must be gratefully acknowledged ; but we must not, therefore, shut our eyes to the perils of the age. The bold front which infidelity and irreligion assume ; the wildness of opinion ; the extravagance of desire ; the rash and reckless spirit which animates a large portion of the working population of this country, and which,

at different times, has threatened to break down the very framework of social organisation, loudly call for some effectual breakwater to prevent the further spread of a deluge, so sweeping in its course, and so desolating in its consequences. Under these circumstances, it is some consolation to find, that no small amount of talent and energy are called forth by benevolent individuals for the purpose of counteracting the destructive tendencies of such mischievous publications, and thus of rescuing from vice and debasement those who have unhappily been caught in the artful web of their delusions.

The writer of the following Essay makes few pretensions to authorship. He has occupied a status on the Local Preachers' Plan for upwards of thirty years, and is, therefore, no stranger to the varied working of the Wesleyan Local Ministry ; still, he is perfectly aware, that a functionary in any public department may have a correct knowledge of the duties and obligations which his particular office imposes, and yet possess a very slender competence to prepare such a digest of those duties and obligations as should justify a pretension to public acceptance. Though he has ventured to enter the field of competition for one of the prizes so nobly offered by the generous donor, yet he has done so with considerable distrust and diffidence ; and, therefore, should the offspring of his present effort share the fate of the many which must necessarily be consigned to

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INTRODUCTION.



The Local or Lay Ministry.

INTRODUCTION.

FROM the earliest period in the history of mankind, whether in barbarous or civilised states, the disposition has prevailed to accomplish all great enterprises, possessing a common interest, by the united agency of organized associations. In the first eras of the world, the principle of combination exerted a powerful influence over man, however rude and uncultivated the state of society in which he was found to exist ; an influence which, whilst it embodied the main-spring of power, frequently gave an impulse to the exercise of that power which affected for good or evil the varied interests of the social economy. That this disposition has kept pace with the advance of civilisation, may be taken as a general proof of the favour with which it has been received. In this country, institutions are spread over every part of its surface ; embracing every variety of object, possessing every element of power, combining every degree of energy, and affording scope for the development and exercise of the vast resources of diversified talent which give to this nation its acknowledged pre-eminence over other civilised states.

It is not necessary to the establishment of the general principle which is set out in these observations, to show, that asso-

ciations, having a common object, necessarily operate for the general advantage of the whole community. The experience of every day is sufficient to support a converse position. Sometimes societies unite to promote the accomplishment of objects of a very questionable character. Of this class are the organized secret societies of a neighbouring state, and, indeed, those that recently distracted one branch of our own empire ; which, by the impetuous rush of strong under-currents, have seriously threatened, at various times, to effect a complete disruption of the social state. Still, when organised associations are under the control of well-framed and wisely-executed laws, they develop the resources and springs of society, consolidate its working power, and command results which no amount of disjointed agency could possibly bring about.

The extent to which the principle of combination may be carried out, the powerful energy it is capable of calling into action, and the varied effects resulting from its operation, are points which have frequently forced themselves on the reflections of the thinking portion of the community. It is by combination that large bodies of men are brought to concentrate their power of action, either for good or evil, so as to accomplish objects the magnitude of which is sometimes as much beyond the reach of human foresight as beyond the control of human counteraction. Such combinations, whatever their design, bring power within the attraction of power, and affinities reciprocally to act on each other. In these co-operative agencies kindred minds generate kindred sympathies, and kindred sympathies interchange impulses with kindred minds. Such power, it must be confessed, is far more easily created than controlled ; for, when combined agency acquires the force of maturity, and is brought fairly to act in any given direction, it becomes an engine for good

or evil which cannot be viewed otherwise than with approbation or alarm. In all combinations where unity of design calls forth unity of action, it is natural to inquire whether the objects contemplated, and the means for their accomplishment, are legitimate and authorised, and what guarantees they offer for the maintenance of the public security ; because, if no standard were erected by which their claims might be measured, and their character and objects defined and understood, anarchy and misrule might become rampant, and the safeguards of society be seriously endangered.

It is pretty generally known in the present day, that Methodism acquired its organised establishment in the year 1739. An entire decade had elapsed from the time that the first germ was planted in the University of Oxford, and the interval had been employed in preparing the nation for a complete reconstruction of practical Christianity. The rise and progress of Methodism may be taken as a standing comment on these words of the Apostle James, "Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth !" and, whilst they supply a categorical answer to the questions, "What are the duties imposed, and what the obligations created, by the possession of moral power ?" present, at the same time, a strange and striking instance of the important advantages which may be derived from a judicious estimate and a right application of favourable conjunctures. Two individuals, without name, without distinction, without funds, without influence, and without an adequate idea of the magnitude of the undertaking, set out through this kingdom on a mission of mercy involving difficulties, imposing labours, and superinducing results too great for human calculation. The proximate effect was electric. The nation was convulsed from one end to the other. Multitudes quailed under the terrors of the Lord, and were led to

seek "redemption through the blood of Christ, even the forgiveness of their sins." Societies sprang up in every direction. Methodism gradually assumed a systematic form ; and in less than twenty years after its introduction, the present comprehensive plan, with all its complicated machinery, was devised, digested, organised, set in motion, and had produced effects as unexampled as they were astonishing. Nor did it confine itself to this country. It first crossed the Atlantic ; then traversed the immense shores of Continental India ; afterwards penetrated the burning deserts of Africa ; and, lastly, visited the scattered Islands of the Sea. So that, in a single century, the arms of Methodism encompassed the world ; the principles of Methodism were recognised by every civilised state, and the members of Methodism entered largely into the population of every country on the face of the earth. "What hath God wrought !"

Since the introduction of Methodism by the Rev. John Wesley, the Methodist Society, with its variously organised ramifications, has acquired a power and exerted an influence for the moral advantage of man which have no counterpart in the history of this great country. Combining in one immense Connexional body a large portion of the British population, it is scarcely possible to form anything like a correct estimate of the amount of spiritual and religious benefit which its united agency has diffused throughout the length and breadth of the empire. With twelve hundred ordained and fifteen thousand unordained Ministers, who, on every Sabbath-day, dispense the Word of Life to nearly four hundred thousand Members of Society, and that number quadrupled of persons who compose the regular congregational attendance on Wesleyan-Methodist ordinances, it cannot but be conceded that the Methodist Society has given a powerful

momentum to the moral machinery now in active employment ; and has never, either directly or indirectly, allowed the exercise of its acknowledged prepotency to move in a direction adverse to the highest ends and interests of the general community.

It is well known that the responsible duties of the Wesleyan Ministry are discharged by Itinerant and Local Preachers, the former being usually selected from the latter, and admitted to the itinerancy after having received ordination ; and the latter, who are simply lay agents, receive their official authority to exercise the office of the ministry at their respective circuit Quarterly Meetings, by the approving votes of their co-ordinate brethren. With the Itinerant branch of the Wesleyan Ministry this Essay will have little to do, except in the way of occasional reference, as affording incidental particulars of illustration. It may, however, be said, *en passant*, that the upper department of the Wesleyan Ministry has numbered amongst its members men of distinguished learning, of eminent talent, of ardent piety, and of extensive usefulness—men who would have shed a lustre on any age or country ; and the author might employ much time and space in placing before the public, in full relief, the many features of fitness for the effective discharge of ministerial functions, which have confessedly appertained to this branch of the administration of Methodism, especially in bygone days ; but that would be foreign to the primary object which this Essay contemplates. It is the general and particular adaptation of the Lay or Local Ministry to the moral and spiritual necessities of the scattered masses, in our villages and small towns, who are chiefly indebted to lay instrumentality for the diffusion of spiritual light and the communication of moral influence, which this Essay is designed to lay before the world.

Without the appointment of Local Preachers, who, in the Wesleyan Ministry, bear the proportion of twelve to one, it is difficult to understand how Methodism could have extended its ramifications, like a complicated piece of net-work, over the entire surface of the empire ; or, if by any force of influence it could have acquired an unexampled numerical status, still, it is difficult to conjecture how it could have maintained its position intact. For, although the plan of itinerancy would probably have secured for it the popular favour in large towns, yet, without its Lay Ministry, village preaching, which constitutes the buttresses of its stability, could never have been adopted as part of its constitutional economy.

PART I.

THE HISTORY, CONSTITUTION, MINISTRY, AND SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL, DURING THE FIRST AGES.

“The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until Shiloh come ; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be.”—GEN. xlix., 10.

“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion ; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem : behold, thy King cometh unto thee : he is just, and having salvation ; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt, the foal of an ass.”—ZECH. ix., 9.



The Local or Lay Ministry.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY—ITS REJECTION BY THE JEWS—DEFINITION OF A CHURCH—THE FIRST MINISTRY A LAY MINISTRY—THE CHARACTER AND SOCIAL POSITION OF THE APOSTLES.

“Lo ! echoing skies resound the gladsome strain,
Messiah comes !—ye rugged paths, be plain !
The Shiloh comes !—ye towering cedars, bend ;
Swell forth, ye valleys ; and, ye rocks, descend ;
The withered branch let balmy fruits adorn,
And clustering roses twine the leafless thorn :
Burst forth, ye vocal groves, your joy to tell—
The God of peace redeems his Israel !”

THIS Essay takes its stand on the threshold of Christianity. The points it occupies, and the events it contemplates, are of the highest conceivable interest to Man. In the grand scheme which the Gospel reveals, we are presented with a mirror which reflects the perfections of the Divine character ; which brings before us in full manifestation the “glory of God, in the person of Jesus Christ ;” and which contains a summary of the direct and collateral, present and future advantages with which it was designed to bless mankind. Never, in the history of the world, has an event been announced so mysterious in its character, so stupendous in its design, and so glorious in its results, as that with which mankind was about to be favoured. The great plan of Human Redemption, which, for four thousand years, had been

but imperfectly shadowed forth through a series of dark and typical dispensations, was now to be clearly unfolded, and the mystery into which the angels so anxiously desired to look, was to be thrown open to the upper and lower worlds.

The fulness of time had arrived, when the Saviour of the world, who, for so many ages had been concealed under a dense cloud of symbolical representations, was to be manifested in the flesh. Four hundred years had elapsed from the time that prophetic inspiration had ceased. The intervening space had been dark and eventful. The inhabitants of Judea were deeply sunk and degenerated. Not only had darkness covered the Roman world, but even the Jewish people had lost the light and glory of former days. Jehovah had ceased to be invoked by Urim and Thummim. The Divine glory which formerly appeared over the mercy-seat, as the mysterious symbol of the Divine presence, had been withdrawn. The tongue of the prophet was mute, and the harp of the minstrel unstrung. "Ichabod" was written on the architrave of the temple, and the shrine of the Lord was served by a venal priesthood. The pure Word of Truth was adulterated by corrupt and interested expositors, and the gorgeous ceremonial of Jehovah's appointment had lost much of its significance and grandeur. The lofty independence of their national character was entrammelled by a ruthless and relentless power; and, to complete the sad picture of their crest-fallen condition, their religious hierarchy was rent by a thousand splittings and factions, having lost

" The spirit in the letter,
The substance in the shade."

The crisis at which mankind had arrived when the Gospel dispensation first beamed upon the world was important and eventful. The destinies of future ages were embodied in the

issue. Christianity majestically appeared as the angel of deliverance, to effect the emancipation of the fetter-bound sons of Adam. A change was about to be introduced, which had no counterpart in the history of the world ; and that change, though ushered in by the choral greetings of an angelic host, was marked by concomitants which gave evidence of its character and were tokens of its power and purpose. The dispensation of Moses—with its imposing ritual ; the pomp and parade of its religious ordinances ; its magnificent temple ; its blood-stained altars ; its economy of priests and Levites ; its national commemorations ; its burnt-offerings, sin-offerings, trespass-offerings, peace-offerings, meat-offerings, and drink-offerings ; its fires and its incense ; its ablutions and legal purifications, with all its expensive and burdensome requirements—was to do homage to a better dispensation,—a dispensation of life and immortality ; a dispensation far more simple in its constitution, but far more elevating in its bearings and tendencies ; a dispensation rich in the diffusion of spiritual elements, ample in its resources, liberal in its supplies, vast in its immunities, irrestrictive in its privileges, entrancing in its prospects, ennobling in its communications, inspiriting in its influence, and glorious in its consummation ! A dispensation that was never to end ; but, having laid its foundation in grace, was to find its top-stone in glory. The period had arrived when this change and substitution were to take effect ; when Moses, and Aaron, and Elias, the representatives of the legal, the priestly, and the prophetic institutions, were to merge their respective offices in the provisions of a better covenant, and acknowledge Christ to be all in all.

It might naturally be expected that a change which proposed the entire reconstruction of the social economy ; which

predicted the ultimate subversion of the Jewish dynasty ; which placed itself in direct antagonism to the ancient mythics of heathen states ; which denounced the oracles and other mummeries of pagan temples ; which demanded the unqualified surrender of man's moral powers, in order that they might be placed under Gospel control ; which claimed the supreme right to indoctrinate the human mind in the principles of religion, and which tolerated no practices unauthorised by Gospel institutions, would everywhere be met with the most violent and determined opposition. The tocsin of alarm was sounded through the land. The Saviour and his followers were denounced by the priests and civil magistrates, as men who sought to dethrone the supreme authority and undermine the foundations of established institutions. Their doctrines, it was represented, contained the seeds of blasphemy and sedition. They were regarded as cheats and jugglers, in league with the devil. Their movements were placed under the most watchful *surveillance* ; and they were everywhere scowled upon as men who endeavoured " to turn the world upside down."

At the time the Redeemer made his advent into this lower world, the state of things under the Jewish economy was dark and disastrous. The throne of David had mingled with the wrecks and relics of fallen empires. The kingdom of Israel had lost its national supremacy, and groaned under the iron yoke of Roman bondage. The social condition of the Jewish people was one of prostration and calamity, and their religious privileges were held by sufferance and restraint. Under such galling circumstances, it might have been expected that the Jews, at least, would have hailed the advent of their promised Messiah with the warmest demonstrations of joy ; but that blind and infatuated people were

so thoroughly imbued with the notion, that the crowning object of the Messiah's advent was to re-erect the throne of David, to reconstruct the kingdom of Israel, to remodel their political economy, and to confer upon their nation the powers and privileges which it enjoyed in the palmy days of its regal glory : that, as Christianity offered no secular advantages, proposed no political distinctions, was unaccompanied by any of those concomitants of dignity and splendour which they had fondly preconceived, they indignantly rejected its offers of mercy, spurned its tenders of salvation, trampled upon its authority and sanctions, and made common course with the opposition that had armed itself to effect its overthrow.

One of the first acts of the Redeemer, on entering upon public life, was the appointment of a Ministry to aid him in publishing the Gospel of the grace of God ; to form churches after his resurrection ; and, generally, to promote the evangelisation of the world. Nothing could be more simple than the constituent elements of which the first ministry was composed ; and, even at this distance of time from its original appointment, with all the artificial refinements which have been introduced into this department of the Christian Church,* it cannot but be admitted by every unprejudiced

* The term Church has been variously interpreted by different writers under the Christian era. Without entering into a critical examination of the many derivations of the term, it may be proper to notice a few of its acceptations. The term Church is sometimes employed to comprehend all believers throughout the world, whatever may be their particular designation ; and in this sense it is frequently called the Catholic, or Universal Church. It is frequently used to denote a particular body of Christians under one common denomination, as the State Church, the Methodist Church, the Baptist Church, &c. In the Establishment of this country the term is generally applied to designate the building in which congregations meet for public worship. There are other senses in which the term is employed by early writers, but they appear to be simple modifications of

mind, that the variations which mark the discriminating features of the Christian ministry, throughout the different branches of the Church of Christ, all suffer by a comparison with the model, in proportion as they have departed from its primitive simplicity.

The first ministry appointed by Our Blessed Lord to carry out the varied administration of Christianity, was, beyond all controversy, a LAY MINISTRY, in the strict acceptation of the term. That the Apostles were inwardly moved, as well as outwardly called, to the ministerial office, can admit of little doubt; but no mention is made of ordination, in any form whatever, as having been employed by the Saviour at the induction to office of the twelve Apostles. Under the special circumstances of their appointment, it might be somewhat difficult to prove whether the mode of ministerial appointment in that instance was intended to be taken as a standing type of ministerial induction; but, it must be confessed, the circumstances add little strength to the foundation on which the figment of the apostolic succession is raised.

In appointing the first ministry, the Saviour limited the number to twelve, and, in the original commission given to them, restricted their labours to the narrow confines of Judea. On the renewal of that commission, after his resurrection, he removed all local restrictions; invested them with an enlargement of ministerial competence to meet every class of exigence that might arise in the prosecution of their labours; endued them with plenary inspiration, accompanied by plenary

those now referred to. Lord King, in his "Enquiry into the Constitution, Discipline, Unity, and Worship of the Primitive Church," describes it as "A society of Christians, meeting together in one place, under their proper pastors, for the performance of religious worship, and the exercising of Christian discipline;" and this is the sense, when not otherwise defined, in which the term must be understood in the course of this Essay.

power and authority to establish such institutions, from time to time, as opening circumstances might render necessary ; to appoint secular and other subordinate agencies, ordain elders, and, generally, to institute and carry out those arrangements which might appear best adapted to accomplish the general design of their ministry.

In the selection of men to discharge the difficult and responsible duties of the Christian Ministry, the Saviour paid little regard to circumstances of a merely extrinsic character. The social status of the Apostles selected by the Saviour, would not be likely to recommend them either to the Jewish aristocracy, or to the different orders of the priesthood ; and still less to the *élite* among the polished Greeks and Romans who were located at Jerusalem and throughout the tetrarchies. It is, therefore, not so much to be wondered at, that the preaching of the Cross, by men undistinguished by social rank or scholastic erudition, should be "to the Jews a stumbling-block, and to the Greeks foolishness."

In the selection and appointment of the first ministry there appears to have been no regard paid by the Saviour to official distinctions. Peter, although the primate in the order in which the Apostles were called, does not appear to have obtained any official pre-eminence above his fellow-disciples. It is true, that, during the personal ministry of the Saviour, Peter appears, on several occasions, with much greater prominence than the rest of the Apostles ; but it is easy to imagine that his natural warmth and eagerness of temper would readily assign to him the post of general interlocutor. Thus, when Jesus interrogated his disciples as to the public opinion that was entertained respecting his person and ministry, Peter immediately replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the Living God."—Matt. xvi., 18. This prompt and

spontaneous reply, no doubt, was expressive of their common conviction. Indeed, the commendatory observations which afterwards fell from the Saviour, though they were addressed to Peter, and have a figurative allusion to his name,* appear to have been intended to put honour not only on the faith of Peter, but of the other Apostles also, whose faith was represented by him on that memorable occasion. "I say unto thee, that thou art Peter, and upon this rock" (this confession of faith) "I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven; and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven." Now, as these words were addressed to Peter individually, they have been understood by many as declaratory of his apostolic supremacy, and as tantamount to a declaration of the Saviour's intention to confer upon him powers and privileges which were not to be exercised nor enjoyed by the other Apostles. But who does not see, that, although the Redeemer addressed himself to Peter, yet that the address was intended to apply equally to all the Apostles, whose views were coincident with their zealous spokesman? No one, surely, will contend that the Christian Church, considered in its broad and comprehensive sense, was to be built on Peter singly! St. Paul has told us that the Church of the Living God was "built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone." And as little can it be sustained that the power of binding and loosing was to be confined to Peter; because, when the Saviour was giving private instructions to

* *Cephas*, a rock; or, *Petra*, a stone.

his disciples generally on several points of practical importance, recommendatory of the great principles of Christianity, he reiterates to them collectively what he had previously addressed to Peter individually : "Verily, I say unto you, whatsoever ye shall bind on earth, shall be bound in heaven ; and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth, shall be loosed in heaven."—Matt. xviii., 18. And he confirmed that reiteration after his resurrection from the dead : "Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them ; and whosesoever sins ye retain, they are retained."—John xx., 23. To this may be added, that, as Peter made his noble confession in answer to a question which Jesus had put to all the disciples, that confession was made in the name of the whole ; and, therefore, what Jesus said to him in reply, was designed for the whole, without distinction.*

* "When Christ declared that he would build his church upon a rock, and that the gates of hell should not prevail against it, he did not say he would set up a power on earth which would possess his authority,—act in his stead, or act as his vicegerent, to dispense either his favour or his anger. We look in vain for a single sentence which, without the grossest perversion, could imply such a purpose as this. But advantage has been taken of the obscurity of language to maintain and encourage this view ; and thus the church has been made—first an abstraction, then a person, and then a saviour. The church, thus invested with Divinity, has a ministry, and her visible representatives, who have assumed the place of God. To set up church principles in opposition to the principles of the Gospel, and to place them in invidious contrast, is both unreasonable and un-Scriptural. It is to confound the means of grace with the Author of grace ; to worship the thing made, and to dishonour the Maker. Shall the earthly members assume the authority of their heavenly principal ? And yet such seems to be the fact, when they confound church membership with faith, or so magnify the ministrations belonging to their office as to leave it to be inferred, that except through their instrumentality there can be no salvation."—*Bishop of Chester's Charge.*

CHAPTER II.

BISHOPS AND PRESBYTERS IN THE PRIMITIVE CHURCH—IN WHAT RESPECTS THEY DIFFERED—APPOINTMENT OF DEACONS—THEIR OFFICE AND DUTIES DEFINED—APPOINTMENT OF DEACONESSES—THEIR EMPLOYMENT IN THE CHURCH—FEMALE PREACHING.

IN the Apostolic age, and during the first three centuries of the Christian era, the only orders in the church were bishops, or presbyters, and deacons. According to Lord King, in his "Constitution of the Primitive Church," *ἐπίσκοπος*, or bishop, was the "pastor, or minister of the parish, to whose care and trust the souls of the church or parish over which he presided were principally and more immediately committed;" and *ωρεσβύτερος*, or presbyter, was "a person in holy orders, having thereby an inherent right to perform the whole office of a bishop." So that a presbyter was subordinate to a bishop *in gradu*, in degree, but equal to him *in ordini*, in order; the bishop being merely, as the old writers term it, *primi inter pares*, the first among equals.* It appears that

* Milner, in his "Church History," when quoting Ignatius, says:—"At first, indeed, or for some time, at least in some instances, church governors were only of two ranks, presbyters and deacons. This seems to have been the case at Philippi (Phil. i., 1), and at Ephesus (Acts xx., 17); and the term bishop was confounded with that of presbyter. The church at Corinth continued long in this state, so far as one may judge from Clement's epistle; and thence we may in part account for the continuance of their contentious spirit. As these churches grew numerous, they could never be all assembled in one place; and the presbyters must have ministered to different congregations, though the church continued one. Towards the end of the first century, all the churches followed the model of the mother church at Jerusalem, where one of the Apostles was the first bishop. A

presbyters had, in the Primitive Church, equal rights with the bishops. Both presbyters and bishops were indifferently addressed by the same appellation. Cyprian, bishop of Carthage, calls both bishops and presbyters, *pastores ovium*, the pastors of the flock, and he styles his own presbyter, *collegis meis*, my colleague. So Polycarp, bishop of Smyrna, in his Epistle to the Philippians, exhorts the members of that church to be subject to the presbyters and deacons, evidently including the bishops under the general term "presbyter." Irenæus, in his synodical epistle, says of the bishops of Rome, *Qui in ecclesiâ sunt presbyteri*. According to Ignatius, bishop of Antioch, it would seem that the term presbyter, generally included all persons belonging to a church who were in holy orders; and in their collective capacity they are called *communi concilio*. In convocations of the presbytery, the bishop took the first seat, and hence Clemens Alexandrinus says of a presbyter, "He is in truth a presbyter of the church, and a minister of the will of God, who does and teaches the things of the Lord; not ordained by men, or esteemed just because a presbyter, but because just, therefore received into the presbytery; who, although he be not honoured with the first seat on earth, yet shall hereafter sit down on the twenty-and-four thrones mentioned in the Revelations, judging the people." So that bishops and presbyters were members of the same presbytery, equal in order, entitled to perform the same acts, and only distinguished in degree by the bishop being *primi inter pares*, and occupying the first seat on the conventional bench.

settled presidency obtained, and the name of Angel was given to him, though that of Bishop soon succeeded." From this extract it clearly appears that the bishop in the Primitive Church was the senior presbyter, and was called elder (superintendent), or bishop, as a mark of official distinction.

The Apostle Peter, in his first Epistle, which was addressed to Jewish converts, has these words :—"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, (*ὁ συμπρεσβύτερος*), and a witness of the sufferings of Christ,—feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, (*ἐπισκοποῦντες*, being bishops of it,) not by constraint, but willingly."—1 Peter v., 1, 2.

"This passage," says the late Rev. Richard Watson, "is a very strong one. The Apostle speaks of himself in his extraordinary capacity, as a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and in his ordinary capacity as a teacher : showing, by the use of a very significant term, that he was on a footing of equality with the other pastors or presbyters. He gives it in charge to them to feed the flock of God ; the charge which, under most particular and affecting circumstances, he had received from the Lord after the resurrection, and which includes in it the performance of everything requisite for the comfort and the edification of Christians ; and he accordingly expresses this by the word *ἐπισκοποῦντες*, being bishops over them. It cannot, with any shadow of reason, be supposed that the Apostle would exhort the elders or presbyters to take to themselves the office, and to perform the duties of a bishop, if that term really marked out a distinct and higher order ; or that he would have considered the presbyters as fitted for the discharge of the whole ministerial office, if there were parts of that office which he knew that it was not lawful for them to exercise."

It seems quite clear, that, in the primitive age, each church had its bishop, and each bishop had his church. The *ὁ ἐπισκοπος* was properly the elder, or superintendent, of each particular church, to whose care and trust the souls of that church, or parish, were committed. Cyprian says there is

but one bishop in a church at a time, "*unus in Ecclesia ad tempus sacerdos*;" and he enunciates his official designations thus: bishop, overseer, pastor, governor, superintendent, and priest: "*Episcopus, prepositus, pastor, gubernator, antistes, et sacerdos*." These appellations sufficiently denote the nature, duties, and extent of the pastoral office. According to ecclesiastical writers, no term was known in the Primitive Church that expressed the word diocese, or could be constructively employed to convey the idea which is now attached to that word. In the synodical epistle of Irenæus to Pope Victor, the bishoprics of Asia are called parishes; and Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, so applies the term: as the parish of Alexandria, the parish of Ephesus, the parish of Corinth, the parish of Athens, the parish of Carthage, and so of the other churches.

It appears from ancient history, that the office of bishop was elective, and that the election was in the whole body of church membership. According to Cyprian, it was one of the decrees of the African synod, held in the year 258, that the ordination of ministers ought to be done with the knowledge and in the presence of the people; that, the people being present, either the crimes of the bad might be detected, or the merits of the good declared; and so the ordination might be just and lawful, being approved by the suffrage and judgment of all: "*Ordinationes sacerdotales non nisi sub populi, assistentes conscientia fieri oportere, ut plebe presente, vel detegantur malorum crimina, vel bonorum merita prædicentur, et sit ordinatio justa, et legitima, quæ omnium suffragio et iudicio fuerit examinata*."

The office of *διάκονος*, or deacon, differed from that of bishop or presbyter, being partly spiritual and partly secular. The origin and specific duties of the diaconal office are

given in Acts vi. : “ And in those days, when the number of the disciples were multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians” (or Hellenists *) “ against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples unto them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the Word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the Word.” But, although deacons were to attend chiefly to the administration of secular affairs, yet some have thought that their ordination was understood to confer a right to exercise spiritual functions, when required to do so by the bishop of their respective churches. It is clear, that, shortly after their appointment, two of the number, namely, Stephen and Philip, exercised the functions of the ministry ; but whether in virtue of their office as deacons, or of any subsequent appointment, does not appear. Without discussing the inference which might be drawn from Acts vi., 8, we have an entire sermon preached by Stephen, in Acts vii., as an answer to the accusation which was brought against him by the Libertines, Cyrenians, Alexandrians, and others, with whom he unanswerably disputed in the synagogue, as stated in Acts vi., 9 ; and, although the martyrdom of Stephen was the effect of that sifting, searching sermon, yet it stands on the sacred page as an imperishable monument of the uncompromising fidelity of that devoted servant of God. Although we are not favoured with the entire sermon which Philip preached

* Hellenists were Jews born in districts where the Greek language was spoken.

to the treasurer of Candace, Queen of Ethiopia, on his return from Jerusalem, on Isaiah liii., 7, 8, as given in Acts vi., 26, *et seq.*, yet we are presented with a touching account of the results of its delivery and application.

The qualifications of deacons for the office are given, in connection with those of bishops, in 1 Tim., iii.

There were also deaconesses appointed in the Apostolic Church, probably to discharge such of the pastoral duties as the laws of decorum might deem it right to assign to grave, serious, and aged females. According to Romans xvi., 1, Phœbe held the office of deaconess in the Church of Cenchrea. Whether these holy women ever exercised the duties of the ministry, involves a problem of difficult solution. St. Paul's prohibition against women speaking in the churches (1 Corinth. xiv., 34, 35), has raised the inference that they were not permitted to preach. But, although Euodius and Syntyche, mentioned in Phil. iv., 2, whom St. Paul affectionately admonishes to draw in the same yoke, were, doubtless, women of some distinction at Philippi, probably deaconesses, yet, as they are mentioned in contradistinction to the "honourable women" in the next verse, who, St. Paul says, "*laboured with me in the Gospel*," it almost seems to favour the presumption that those honourable women were occupied in some way as coadjutors with the Apostle himself in the propagation of Christianity.

The Greek verb which we translate "laboured," is derived from the agonistic contentions by the wrestlers in the Olympic games; and the application of that term to the honourable women who laboured *with* the Apostle in the Gospel, suggests the idea that they bore some part in the work necessary to carry on the administrative department of Christianity, if not throughout the wide field over which the

apostolic mission extended, yet certainly at Philippi and its immediate neighbourhood.

On the subject of female preaching much has been said and written, and generally in its unqualified condemnation. In 1 Cor. xiv., 34, 35, the Apostle says: "Let your women keep silence in the churches, for it is not permitted for women to speak in the church." Now, there is some difficulty in reconciling this prohibition with 1 Cor. xi., 5, where the Apostle's correction of a mode which had gained prevalence in the church involves the admission of a practice which has given rise to some controversy. The whole question seems to rest on the constructive sense in which the term *prophesying* ought to be received. Some writers, as Beza, Thomas Aquinas, Calvin, and Paræus, take it to signify, *to interpret Scripture under Divine inspiration*. Others, as Estius, Wells, and Bishop Pearce, *to teach and communicate by inspiration the doctrines of Revelation*. However, as the word is applied to women (who, in chapter xiv., 34, 35, are not permitted to teach in public), some commentators of the last century conceived it was *singing sacred hymns under the impulse of the Holy Spirit*. But, according to the criticism of Dr. Blomfield, such a sense of the word is altogether unauthorised. Bishop Pearce contends that *teaching* is consistent with both the above-cited passages, and says: "When St. Paul imposes silence on women in the church, he means silence, *not* in opposition to any gift of the Spirit, but to the desire which those who had *not the Spirit* might have of instructing others in Christian knowledge." "I see not," says Dr. Blomfield, in his "Critical Notes on the New Testament," "why he (Bishop Pearce) should confine the sense to teaching. It may, I think, include every other sort of speaking under Divine inspiration,—to edification,

exhortation, and instruction, in addition to that of praying, just before mentioned by the Apostle ; all equally fulfilling the prophecy of Joel ii., 28, applied by St. Peter (Acts ii., 17) to the times of the Gospel ; namely, *that their daughters should prophesy.*" See also Acts xxi., 9.

It seems, that, on the day of Pentecost, the extraordinary gift of tongues was not confined to the twelve Apostles. The number of disciples assembled in the upper room was one hundred and twenty ; but what proportion of women composed that number does not appear. In Acts i., 14, it is stated that women were present ; and Mary, the mother of Jesus, is expressly mentioned by name. In Acts ii., 16, *et seq.*, Peter distinctly refers to that miraculous effusion of spiritual influence, as a fulfilment of Joel's prophecy when the Spirit should be poured out on "women," as well as on men ; and when their "daughters" should prophesy as well as their sons. Indeed, it would be difficult to understand how that prophecy could have been fulfilled on that occasion, unless the Spirit had been poured out upon all the disciples then present.*

Other officers are mentioned by the early Fathers, as having

* Mr. Wesley seems to have taken a coincident view of the subject, as appears from a letter to Miss Bosanquet, afterwards Mrs. Fletcher, who, for many years, preached the Gospel with great acceptance and usefulness :—

"Londonderry, June 13th, 1771.

"MY DEAR SISTER,—I think the strength of the cause rests in your having an extraordinary call. So, I am persuaded, has every one of our lay preachers ; otherwise, I would not countenance their preaching at all. It is plain to me, that the whole work of God termed Methodism is an extraordinary dispensation of his providence. Therefore, I do not wonder if several things occur therein which do not fall under ordinary rules of discipline. St. Paul's ordinary rule was, 'I permit not a woman to speak in the congregation ;' yet, in extraordinary cases, he made a few exceptions, at Corinth in particular.—I am, my dear sister, your affectionate brother,

"JOHN WESLEY."

exercised functions in the Primitive Church ; as aolyths, or acolytes, exorcists, and lectors, who all appear to have been lay agents employed in the performance of certain duties belonging to the sanctuary. The first were sub-deacons, who had no spiritual functions, but assisted in the discharge of such diaconal duties as were strictly secular. It is not easy, at this advanced period of the Christian era, to ascertain what constituted the office of an exorcist. The Greek word from which it is derived signifies, in its best sense, to administer an oath. Whether oaths were administered in ordination, or otherwise, cannot now be determined. There is another sense in which the word is sometimes applied, but which application could not be accepted in connection with Christianity. The lectors had, probably, some official affinity to the Scripture-readers who have lately been introduced into the Established Church of this country. All these offices were held in prospect of ministerial ordination, as bishops usually passed through one or more of them before they were raised to the ministerial office, no bishop having arrived *per saltum*, by a leap, to the pastoral dignity.

CHAPTER III.

ORDINATION IN THE APOSTOLIC CHURCH—SEVENTY DISCIPLES NOT ORDAINED
—ORDINATION DEFINED—TRACTARIAN DOGMAS RESPECTING ORDINATION
—OPINIONS OF ARCHBISHOPS CRANMER AND WHITGIFT ON ORDINATION
AND PREACHING.

As no mention is made in the New Testament of ordination* having been instituted by the Saviour, or of any positive directions given to his Apostles to institute such a rite after his death, the premises are open to an inference in favour of a Lay Ministry. In Luke x., 1, we have an account of the Saviour sending forth seventy disciples, two and two, as he had sent forth the twelve, on their admission to the apostleship. The whole history of that transaction affords proof

* Ordination is the act of conferring holy orders upon persons who are admitted to exercise the functions of the sacred ministry, and is done either with or without the imposition of hands. In the Church of England the several orders of the priesthood within an ecclesiastical district or diocese, are ordained by the bishop of that diocese, the exercise of the rule being one of the exclusive prerogatives of the episcopal order. In most of the Protestant Churches in Europe, the form of ordination is Presbyterian; that is, by the laying on of the hands of the presbytery within a particular church; and which appears to have been the primitive mode. The instructions given by Paul to Timothy were, “Neglect not the gift that is in thee by prophecy, *with the laying on of the hands of the presbytery.*” According to Cyprian, “All clerical ordinations (in the Primitive Church) were performed by the common council of the whole presbytery;” and it is a fact well known to those who are read in ecclesiastical history, that, in the Church of Alexandria, *presbyters ordained their own bishops* for more than two hundred years. Among the Methodists, the ordination of the ministers is in the Annual Conference, with the President at its head, and is by prayer, and, latterly, with the imposition of hands, according to the Presbyterian form.

that they were commissioned to propagate Christianity. Their mission comprehended, not merely the publication of the Gospel, but the working of miracles in attestation of the divinity of that mission. The instructions they received from the Saviour are given in considerable detail by the Evangelist Luke in the opening of the chapter ; and the report they gave, on their return, of the success of their ministerial labours, stands as part of the narrative. That they were lay, or unordained, preachers can scarcely be doubted. Indeed the whole structure of the narrative is confirmatory of such a presumption. Had the Saviour intended that ordination should become one of the Christian institutes, and that no minister of the New Covenant could legitimately exercise the functions of the sacred ministry, without having first received ordination, it seems reasonable to presume that he would, either by example or precept, have left so important a question beyond the reach of future controversy.

The first account of ordination we have in the New Testament is given in Acts vi., where the seven deacons received that rite by the imposition of hands. Before Stephen and his fellow-deacons had been ordained, Barnabas had been chosen *by lot* to supply the apostolic vacancy occasioned by the treason and death of Judas ; but no mention is made of his ordination ; and the very mode of his selection seems to negative the idea that he was ordained, he having taken the office of an Apostle who had been specially called to the apostleship by the Saviour. Twenty years after the Saviour's ascension, a Jew, named Apollos, "an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures," visited Ephesus,* and

* In Ephesus, at that time the metropolis of Asia Minor, the temple of Diana was erected ; and such was the veneration in which that goddess

“spake boldly in the synagogue, proving by the Scriptures that Jesus was Christ.” At that time he appears to have been in his Christian novitiate, for he “knew only the baptism of John.” Aquilla and his wife Priscilla, two Jewish Christians (expelled with others from Italy by an edict of the Emperor Claudius), who had been converted under the ministry of St. Paul, at Corinth, where they had wrought with him as tentmakers, accompanied him on his journey to Jerusalem as far as Ephesus, where they remained and pursued their occupation. Having obtained considerable acquaintance with doctrinal, preceptive, and experimental Christianity, and perceiving that Apollos was sincere, they undertook to “teach him the way of God more perfectly.” It seems quite clear, however, that Apollos, at his outset, was an unordained, and, consequently, a lay, preacher. Though he might have been subsequently ordained (of which there is no evidence), yet, were it even so, it would not diminish the force of the argument in favour of lay preaching.

On the subject of ordination to the ministerial office, much has been said and written, especially in later times. Those who have enlisted under the banners of Tractarianism have brought all their powers of learning to blight and blast the doctrines of the Reformation ; and the man is little to be envied, either for his head or heart, who can subscribe to

was held, that all Asia contributed to support the magnificence of her wealth and the extent of her superstitious influence. It is said that this temple, which was one of the seven wonders of the world, was 220 years in building. It was adorned with 127 columns of Parian marble, each composed of a single shaft, sixty feet in height, and elaborately ornamented. It contained a theatre, gorgeously decorated, which would accommodate 20,000 spectators, and was in all respects the most costly structure in the world. For ages the responses of its far-famed oracles acquired for it a reputation, and secured for it a treasury, which placed it far beyond the reach of human rivalry.

dogmas like the following :—"Each bishop of our church has, at the hands of another bishop (himself similarly called to the office), received in the most solemn manner the gift of the Holy Ghost, and that apostolic power in the church, for the support of which the Saviour pledged himself that his assistance should not be wanting to the end of time."—"Tracts for the Times," vol. i., No. 10, p. 2. And again, that "it is only this (the apostolic commission) that can give any security that the administration of the Word and sacraments shall be effectual in the saving of souls. The Dissenting teacher has it not."—"Tracts," vol. i., No. 35, p. 4. So, again : "Thus the Apostles had spiritual sons, then spiritual grandsons, then great-grandsons, and so on."—"Tracts," vol. i., No. 4, p. 1. Again : "Presbyterian ministers have assumed a power which was never entrusted to them. They have presumed to exercise the power of ordination, and to perpetuate a succession of ministers, without having received a commission to do so."—"Tracts," vol. i., No. 7, p. 2.

Now, in opposition to the Tractarian heresy, we have the testimonies of some of the most pious and distinguished prelates that have ever dignified the episcopal bench, in support of the constitution of the Primitive Churches ; and they certainly form a mass of information and a body of evidence on this much-disputed question which are most valuable and important. From this list of divines two only are selected.

Archbishop Cranmer, who will not be accused of sectarianism, says :—"That in the admission of these officers (persons appointed to the Christian ministry), there be divers comely ceremonies and solemnities used, which be not of necessity, but only for a good order and seemly fashion ; for if such offices and ministrations were committed without such solemnity, they were nevertheless truly committed. And

there is no more promise of God, that grace is given (by those who commit it) in the committing of ecclesiastical office, than it is in the committing of the civil office. Sometimes the Apostles, and *other* unto whom God had given abundantly his Spirit, sent or appointed ministers of God's Word; and when any were appointed or sent by the Apostles or *other*, the people, of their own voluntary will, with thanks, did accept of them; not for the supremacy, impery, or dominion that the Apostles had over them, to command, but as good people, ready to obey the voice of good counsellors, and to accept anything that was necessary for their edification and benefit. *There is no certain rule prescribed or limited by the Word of God for the nomination, election, presentation, or appointing of any ecclesiastical ministers; but the same is left unto the positive laws and ordinances of every Christian region.*"*

Archbishop Whitgift is equally clear and cogent. He says: "The electing and ordering of ministers doth appertain to bishops. *I do not say only to bishops*: I will prove that there is no certain form of electing prescribed in Scripture, but that the same is left free for the church to appoint as shall be thought most convenient for their states and times. Christ did of himself alone, without the consent of any, call and choose his Apostles, and likewise the seventy disciples whom he sent to preach. The Apostles (Acts i.) altered this manner and form, for they presented two, and one of them was chosen by lot. In the 6th of Acts they clean altered this also, for the people presented seven to the Apostles, and they were all chosen without lots, the Apostles laying their hands upon them. In the 14th of Acts this

* See Jenkins's "Remains of Cranmer; a Confutation of Unwritten Verities," and other of his works.

form is likewise changed, for Paul and Barnabas ordained ministers in every city, without either presentment by the people or casting lots. In the 13th of Acts it is manifest that Paul and Barnabas were sent only by the prophets and doctors, without any consent of the people either given or required. Paul sent Timothy and Titus, and gave them authority to ordain others. So that it is certain, that there is no prescript manner and form appointed to be observed for ever, seeing that the Apostles themselves did not bind or tie themselves to any such rule. Whereupon I conclude, that, in the Scriptures, there is no certain form prescribed of electing ministers, and that the doings of the Apostles in that matter are not at all times of necessity to be followed ; but it is sufficient to respect their end and purpose ; that is, that there be meet ministers." *

These are the testimonies of two archiepiscopal divines, of great learning and still greater piety. Tractarianism may sneer at the "low church" views of these excellent dignitaries ; but unprejudiced men will form their own judgment upon opinions so fairly and honestly stated, and so unmistakeable in the sense they convey. Nor are these solitary notions. Bishop Hooper, and a multitude of later divines, held coincident views. And, indeed, with the New Testament in our hands, it is difficult to understand how opposite views could be safely entertained ; but, recollecting that judgment and prejudice seldom draw in the same yoke, the mystery is unravelled. When the institutions of Christianity are tried at the bar of human opinion, and the speculations of men are substituted for the truths of Revelation, then the sheet-anchor of safety is lost, and the frail bark is

* See "The Defense of the Answer to the Admonition against the Replie of T. Cartwright," and various Tracts, by John Whitgift, D.D.

either driven over a boisterous sea, or left to founder on the rocks of perdition. Christianity is not now upon its trial. It is true that its doctrines and institutions have been brought under the scrutiny of man, and he has boldly decided upon its character and claims ; but, hitherto, it has passed through the heat of ordeal-fires unscathed, and, phoenix-like, has come forth on every fresh occasion with new and increasingly-resplendent beauties.

Upon a careful review of this important branch of the general subject, there is strong reason to believe that the Saviour, who, throughout his personal ministry, adapted his various means to the respective ends to which those means were to be applied, left it with his successors, to the end of time, to frame their local institutions, and to accommodate their working plans, so as to meet the variations in the human condition, and the changing exigencies which time might introduce. Christianity, viewed in its broad and comprehensive character, is not a system of precise legislation, comprising a number of specific details, and marking out with literal exactitude everything to be done and to be avoided. The standard of moral obligation is rather general than defined, and leaves every man to infer his particular duty from the circumstances with which he is surrounded, and the amount of his capability to act in accordance with those circumstances. Christianity is, in fact, an inculcation of great principles, which are entrusted to the Church to be applied in such a way as may be best calculated to further the chief ends and interests of life. Doubtless, the Apostles exercised a sound discretion in the institution of ordination, as a rite preliminary to the exercise of ministerial functions. In a multitude of instances it might have been extremely necessary. Judaism was tenacious of the minutest parts of

its temple, ritual, and formulary ; and for the Apostles to have tolerated the indiscriminate admission of persons to perform duties so sacred and responsible as those of the Christian Ministry, without some mode of induction befitting the office, might have given great offence to those amongst the Jews who were well-disposed towards Christianity. It seems that the Apostles were regulated in the exercise of their discretionary powers rather by expediency than law, and hence they relaxed the strictness of the rule, when its exception would better promote the great interests they uniformly sought to serve. What amount of lay agency has been employed throughout the long space which has intervened between the introduction of Christianity and the establishment of Methodism cannot be ascertained, but that the Local or Lay Ministry of Methodism has the closest approximation to the ministry appointed by the Saviour, both in principle and practice, may be fiercely denied, but can never be successfully refuted.

CHAPTER IV.

MORAL STATE OF THE WORLD ON THE INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY—
EFFECTS OF NATURAL RELIGION—RAPID AND EXTENSIVE SPREAD OF
CHRISTIANITY—HOSTILITY ARMED AGAINST THE GOSPEL—TERTULLIAN'S
REMARKS—SUFFERINGS OF THE EARLY CHRISTIANS—TEN PERSECUTIONS
(*note*)—SPREAD OF CHRISTIANITY ACCOUNTED FOR.

ONE of the primary objects of the New Testament was to bring life and immortality to light through the medium of a published revelation of God's will. On the first promulgation of the Gospel scheme, Christianity placed itself in direct antagonism with the various forms of heathenism which, at the period of its introduction, had obtained the sanction and authority of the different states through which the Gospel was intended to carry its propagation. At the time Christianity broke upon the world, natural religion had attained the climax of its glory. Corinth, Ephesus, Athens, Rome, and other celebrated cities, had temples of surpassing magnificence; and in Athens alone, 30,000 gods were acknowledged and adored. On the altar of Grecian philosophy the whole civilised world offered the incense of its admiration, while the military prowess and civil polity of Rome were everywhere acknowledged. To the potency of those nations the whole world tendered its ready submission. But with all the perfection of their social institutions, the acquirements of their literature, the polish of their manners, the skill of their diplomacy, and the terror of their name, the moral character of both Greeks and Romans was sunk to the lowest

conceivable point of human degradation. Indeed, if it had not been a fact of Revelation, we could scarcely have conceived it possible that men so celebrated for the splendour of their literary acquisitions, so polished, so free from the barbarisms of other states, could by possibility have sunk into such deep and awful degeneracy, as to justify the Apostle's description of them, when he tells us they were "*filled* with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness ; full of envy, murder, debate, deceit, malignity ; whisperers, backbiters, haters of God, despiteful, proud, boasters, inventors of evil things, disobedient to parents, without understanding, covenant breakers, without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful : who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, but have pleasure in them that do them." Rom. i., 29, *et seq.*

But our surprise will be diminished considerably when we learn from Gibbon,—that accomplished but dangerous writer,—that "the various modes of religious worship which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true, by the philosopher as equally false, and by the magistrate as equally useful. Indeed, their religious observances throughout were so modelled and arranged, as rather to indulge than to shock the ruling predilections of the human character. Not only were their rites and ceremonies in the highest degree obscene and disgusting to morality, but their carnivals, and other festivals and shows, so congenial to natural inclination, dragged the passions and interests at will."

With principles and practices so utterly repugnant to the spirit and genius of Christianity, the Gospel had to contend at the opening of its ministry. No sooner had its great and

glorious purpose been proclaimed than the anti-Christian legions were summoned to the muster ; and the Saviour, with his little chosen band, had to stand forth against the power and policy of the god of this world and his earthly followers. The preaching of the Cross soon roused the prejudices of superstition, the hatred of the Jews, the contempt of the Greeks, the power of the Romans, the pride of philosophy, and the craft and malice of priests. With all these the Gospel had to grapple in turn ; and, as may be supposed, the conflict was arduous and difficult, allowing of neither truce nor termination. The condensed energies of wicked men and wicked spirits were thrown into the onslaught. The struggle was with adversaries who were crafty in strata-gem, powerful in battle, and incessant in attack ; adversaries, at least some of them, with whom Christianity could make no armistice, and from whom it could expect no quarter. Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and all the ecclesiastical machinery that Judaism could call to its aid, were placed in antagonistic array against the Gospel. Every inch of ground was pertinaciously disputed, and every attempt at advance determinately opposed ; and, as the Saviour's name had not been enrolled among the presiding or local deities in the Pantheon, Christianity received neither countenance nor protection from the Roman people.

But was Christianity crushed in this stand against such unequal opposition ? Quite the contrary. We have it on the authority of several early writers, whose testimony has never been shaken, that within thirty years after the ascension of the Redeemer, it had spread over Asia Minor ; visited the scattered islands in the *Ægean* and throughout the Mediterranean ; planted its standard on the western boundaries of Europe ; opened communications with the northern

shores of Africa ; found its way into the very household of the Cæsars, and extended its power and influence to the utmost boundaries of the Roman Empire. According to Pliny, in his celebrated letter to the Emperor Trajan, the “ contagion of the superstition,” as he termed it, had spread, not only through villages and cities, but over the entire surface of the Roman dominions. By the end of the third century, Christianity had been received throughout the greatest part of the known world. Tertullian, a presbyter of the Carthaginian Church, who lived in the beginning of the second century, and the first Latin Father whose works have come down to us, says, in his “Apologies:” “ Were we disposed to return evil for evil, it were easy for us to revenge the injuries which we sustain. But God forbid that his people should vindicate themselves by human fire, or be reluctant to endure that by which their sincerity is evinced. Were we disposed to act the part, I will not say of secret assassins, but of open enemies, should we want force and numbers ? Are we not dispersed through the world ? It is true we are but of yesterday, and yet we have filled all your places, cities, islands, castles, boroughs, councils, camps, courts, palaces, senate, forum ; we leave you only your temples.” He adds, “ We could make a terrible war upon you, by simply being so passively revengeful as only to leave you. Should the numerous host of Christians retire from the empire, into some remote region, the loss of so many men, of all ranks and degrees, would leave a hideous gap, and inflict a shameful scar upon the Government. You would stand aghast at your desolation, and be struck dumb at the general silence and horror of nature, as if the world were departed.”*

* Tertull. Apol., xi., 57.

Now, it must be confessed that the extraordinary triumphs of Christianity received no aid, directly or indirectly, from the established authorities of the countries over which it extended its moral and spiritual influence. So far was the Gospel mission from being promoted by the Jews, the Greeks, or the Romans, that those powers, although on national grounds hostile to each other, consented to merge political differences in a common coalition to oppose Christianity by all the means it might be desirable to employ. But, though persecution had recourse to all the refinements of cruelty, and though the gladiatorial shows, and other exhibitions of torture, were every-day spectacles, still the Christians multiplied ! Thus *“the blood of the martyrs became the SEED of the church,”** and the generative properties of that seed gloriously appeared in the immense harvests which it successively brought forth.

In an early stage of the Christian dispensation, the Saviour prophetically announced to his immediate disciples the storms and tempests which were gathering thickly around them ; and, like a faithful friend who was well acquainted with the severities of the exigence, gave them such affectionate counsel and caution, as the threatening circumstances evidently rendered necessary. “They shall lay their hands on you, and persecute you, delivering you up to the synagogues, and into prisons, being brought before kings and rulers for my name’s sake. And ye shall be betrayed both by parents, and brethren, and kinsfolks, and friends, and some of you shall they cause to be put to death : yea, the time cometh that he that killeth you will think that he doeth God service. But these things have I told you, that when the time shall come you may remember

* “The more you mow us down, the thicker we rise ; the Christian blood you spill is the seed you sow ; it springs from the earth again, and fructifies the more.”—*Tertull. Apol., c. 50.*

that I told you of them." How literally was this prediction fulfilled in the days of the Apostles! They were treated with every indignity; were represented as the organs of sedition; as men who aimed at the subversion of civil government; as troublers of the earth. They lived in dens and caves of the earth; their lives were hunted "like partridges on the mountains." They were dragged before civil tribunals, imprisoned, scourged, put to death. They were crucified, slain with the sword, sawn asunder, burnt to ashes, and otherwise slaughtered for the gratification of sanguinary multitudes, not of savage barbarians, but of men who had carried civilisation and the arts to the highest conceivable degree of perfection. It is said, that, under the Emperor Nero, in whose reign the Apostle Paul suffered martyrdom, every engine of torture which human cruelty could devise, was brought into play against the unoffending Christians. "Their sufferings," says a truthful historian, "were aggravated by insult and mockery. Some were disguised in the skins of wild beasts, and worried to death by dogs. Some were crucified; others were wrapped in pitched shirts and set on fire, when the day closed, to illuminate the night. For these executions Nero lent his gardens, and amused the people by a mock Circassian entertainment, being a spectator of the whole in the dress of a charioteer, sometimes mingling with the crowd on foot, and sometimes viewing the spectacle from his car." Indeed, the persecutions with which the first Christians were relentlessly visited, followed each other in such rapid succession, that there was scarcely any interval left for breathing between those acts and monuments of popular and sanguinary cruelty.*

* The Ten Persecutions, referred to by several ecclesiastical writers, took place in the following order:—The first commenced under *Nero*, A.D. 65.

But whence did the Gospel acquire an influence so mysterious and potent as to invest with an inextinguishable zeal and energy, persons of every colour, caste, clime, sex, age, and condition, in the face of cruelties so refined and sanguinary? Was it the offspring of human invention?—the effect of human sagacity, or policy, or power? Can it be accounted for on any rational or worldly principle? Certainly not. The whole is utterly at variance with every class of natural causes within the range of human knowledge. The reputed son of a carpenter—without birth, rank, wealth, or other human distinction; without the parade of pretension, the assumption of power, or the aid of popularity—selected a few followers from the humble walks of life, to accompany him on a mission which everywhere created the most inveterate prejudices, and armed the most threatening hostilities against it: and yet this despised and persecuted band convulsed the whole world; triumphed over kingdoms; defied the rage of

The second happened under *Domitian* (the last of the Cæsars), A.D. 90. The third began under *Trajan*, the contemporary of Pliny, A.D. 100, in which Clement, Bishop of Rome, and Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch, suffered martyrdom. The fourth took place under *Adrian*, A.D. 126, and continued under *Antoninus Pius*, to A.D. 140. In this persecution, Polycarp, Bishop of Smyrna, the personal friend and companion of the Apostle John, was sacrificed to the popular fury. The fifth was under *Marcus Aurelius*, A.D. 162. The sixth took place under *Severus*, A.D. 203. In this persecution Irenæus, Bishop of Lyons, was martyred. The seventh was under *Maximinus*, A.D. 236. The eighth was under *Decius*, A.D. 251. The ninth commenced under *Valerian*, A.D. 258, in which Cyprian, Bishop of Carthage, suffered martyrdom. The tenth and last was under *Dioclesian*, A.D. 303. In this last persecution, we are told that the greatest conceivable cruelties were exercised upon the Christians. On one Christmas-day 20,000 were slaughtered by order of the tyrant; and to commemorate the total extirpation of Christianity by that monster of iniquity, a medal was struck bearing the inscription, *Nomine Christianorum deleto*; at once announcing to the world that he had not only effected a general extermination of the Christians, but that he had effectually blotted out the Christian name.—*See Milner and Eusebius.*

potentates ; smiled at fetters, fires, and death ; planted the standard of Christianity in every land ; sealed the truth of their testimony with their own blood, and diffused the converting influence and effects of the Gospel over every civilised and barbarous state. The cause of all this is to be found in the omnipotence of Divine Truth !

The first preachers of righteousness were men little skilled in the formation of organised plots for the propagation of falsehood. Even had they formed a conspiracy for such a purpose, the opposition with which they were everywhere met would have crushed such a conspiracy in its very germ. Indeed, every circumstance by which they stood surrounded is diametrically opposed to such a presumption. They had no earthly interests to serve, either of gain or ambition. What they denounced in others they renounced in themselves. In life they exemplified the purity of their principles, motives, and aims, and in death they bore triumphant testimony to the power of Divine Truth.

When Christianity was first announced by its Divine Founder, it was natural to expect that the character and claims of a religion which proposed utterly to exterminate the hoary-headed institutions of heathen states, and abrogate the divinely-instituted ceremonial of the Mosaic economy, would be subjected to the most rigid investigation and scrutiny. It was not to be expected that a religion so novel in its character, so bold in its assumptions, so sweeping in its demands,—a religion that declared war against the venerated mythology of paganism ; denounced the Pantheon as the pest-house of idolatry ; held up the tutelary deities of Greece to scorn and execration ; claimed for the Saviour the moral jurisdiction of the world, and the supreme dominion over the hearts of all mankind,—should be allowed to propagate its

pretensions with impunity. The world simultaneously rose, not merely to dispute its claims, but to crush its rising power and exterminate its very name. The Jewish Sanhedrim thundered out its anathemas against it, and engaged the authorities of Greece and Rome as its powerful allies. Still Christianity spread, like the branching rays on the approach of day, until its circumfulgent beams scattered the moral gloom with which the world had been enveloped for so many ages !

CHAPTER V.

CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY—MINISTRY OF JOHN THE BAPTIST—MINISTRY OF THE REDEEMER—SERMON ON THE MOUNT—PARABOLIC MODE OF PREACHING—STYLE OF CHRIST'S PREACHING—PREACHING OF THE FIRST APOSTLES—DESCENT OF THE HOLY GHOST ON THE DAY OF PENTECOST—CONVERSION OF ST. PAUL—PERSECUTION AT JERUSALEM THE OCCASION OF A WIDER DIFFUSION OF CHRISTIANITY BY MEANS OF LAY INSTRUMENTALITY.

A RELIGION from heaven might be expected to furnish the most clear, the most elevated, the most impressive, and the most glorious conceptions of the character and attributes of the Deity, with the most distinct and specific duties it required from man. It should contain incentives to piety and dissuasives from sin; and the promises and threatenings it awarded and denounced should possess sufficient encouragement and alarm to aid the effects they respectively sought to accomplish. It should be competent to give to man a correct knowledge of his true character; to convey proper estimates of the opposite destinies of futurity; and to supply motives and means to secure eternal happiness and to avoid eternal misery. It should brand with condemnation whatever is adverse to the soul's present and future interests, and stamp with approval whatever promotes its intermediate and final happiness. It should define the elements of spiritual character; develop the resources of spiritual joy; mark out the nature and extent of reciprocal duties and social claims; explain and enforce whatever tends to sublimiate the human character; trace out the lines

of thought and of action ; show the approaches to holiness and heaven ; point out the springs, motives, faculties, and powers by which human nature is actuated ; exhibit the difficulties and dangers of life in its attractions and variations ; blend and modify the influences which outward circumstances exert on the heart and its numerous dependencies. Its doctrines and precepts should correspond with, and be promotive of, its general design ; and, externally and internally, it should bear the visible imprint of its Divine originality. Such was, and such is, the Christianity of the New Testament dispensation, and it invites the most searching investigation into its character and pretensions.

Let us now direct our attention more immediately to the Scriptural character of the first ministry, as established under the Gospel.

Before the Saviour entered upon his public ministry, John the Baptist had preached for several months in the wilds of Judea. He appears to have formed a connecting link between the Jewish and Christian dispensations ; and, doubtless, received his commission as a preacher of righteousness, like the prophets, immediately from God. His appearance and manners excited the greatest attention. His habits were simple, and his life austere. He was clothed with "raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins ; and his meat was locusts* and wild honey." Both Isaiah and Malachi had prophetically announced him as a "voice crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God ;" alluding to

* The Eastern locusts, which are much larger than those known amongst us, were anciently used in Asia and Africa as an article of food ; and they are said to be a luxury with the Arabs to this day. They generally move in large swarms, and, therefore, are very plentiful.

the custom of Eastern monarchs, who, before they set out on an expedition over countries little traversed, sent pioneers before them to open passes, fill up valleys, and remove obstructions to the advances of an army. The leading doctrine he preached was "repentance." His object was to awaken conviction, to excite alarm, in order to prepare men for the ministry of reconciliation. His preaching was plain, pointed, and energetic ; and the effect produced was extraordinary. "Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, and were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins." His message was delivered with uncompromising fidelity, and pointed to the more important ministry of the Saviour. "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth, therefore, fruits meet for repentance. I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance ; but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear : he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire : whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner ; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire." The sanctity of his life was a standing attestation of the spirit of his mission ; and it was his glory to be the first martyr for the truth, under the New Testament dispensation.

The preaching of repentance by the Baptist had prepared the way for the correlative doctrine of "remission of sins" by the Saviour and his Apostles. Shortly after the Redeemer had been baptized of John in Jordan, he selected his ministerial associates, and entered at once on his mission of mercy to a perishing world. His first sermon is a comprehensive

epitome of Christianity, and contains a condensed embodiment of the privileges, prohibitions, duties, and claims comprehended in the Gospel. It is throughout a practical discourse, insisting upon what the old writers called the *agenda*, or things to be done, rather than the *credenda*, or things to be believed. It was delivered not in the synagogue, but in the open air, affording a substantial intimation that the sanctity of religious services is not in the *place* but in the *ordinance*. The congregation that listened to the Saviour's inaugural address was large and attentive—and, such was the clearness and authority with which he explained and enforced the great points of instruction, "the people were astonished at his doctrine." The proximate effect of the sermon is stated in the first verse of Matt. viii. :—"When he came down from the mountain great multitudes followed him." Whether the multitude were prompted by curiosity, or actuated by motives of a higher order, must be decided when results will be traced to the acts which gave them birth.

In pursuing his ministry the Saviour appears to have adopted no systematic plan, but to have seized for improvement every passing occurrence and circumstance which was capable of being turned to spiritual advantage. On many occasions his instructions were conveyed through the medium of parabolic or allegorical representations, which were powerfully applied to the illustration of some great and important truth, concealed behind the drapery of natural imagery. This mode of instruction, though not new, acquired incomparable force and effect in the hands of the Redeemer. The parable of the Prodigal Son is inimitably touching and beautiful, and far transcends anything of the kind ever placed on record. Its double interpretation stands forth with irresistible

clearness, and commands at once the assent and conviction of the understanding and heart. Again, what pathos and affection breathe through the serial discourses of the Saviour contained in John xiv., xv., xvi., and xvii., especially as viewed in connection with the affecting circumstances out of which they arose. Indeed, the "beloved disciple" has given a number of the Saviour's discourses on various occasions—some doctrinal, some preceptive, some admonitory, and all affording practical instruction. In many instances his discourses are associated with miracles, or other criteria of the Divinity of the preacher.

But if on some occasions he adopted the *suaviter in modo*, on others he employed the *fortiter in re*. What an extraordinary exhibition of ministerial faithfulness is given in Matt. xxiii., especially in that part of the application contained in the thirty-third verse ! How must the hypocritical Pharisees, and others, who fell under his unqualified rebuke and denunciation, have quailed and writhed under that sifting, searching address ! In all the Saviour's discourses one uniform aim is apparent, which, though occasionally presented under figurative comparisons, is never lost behind the curtain of concealment. What a ministerial model has the Saviour left in the inspired record ! His various discourses embody all the essentials for congregational address ; whilst his adaptation of mode, and fidelity of application, invest his ministry with the highest conceivable charm and importance.

The preaching of the Apostles was identical in spirit with that of their Divine Master. Though they were not remarkable for capaciousness of mind, acuteness of intellect, or extensive and varied erudition, yet they had that within them which gave vigour to thought, promptitude to purpose, and energy to action. They formed a holy band—

“ In motive, aim,
And deed coincident. Their common rule
Of life the Word of God ; their power to act
His grace ; their highest end his praise.”

It may well be conceived that the propagation of a new religion would be attended with considerable difficulty and danger. To the Jews, Christianity was a system ostensibly adverse to all the opinions upon which their hopes were founded. That people had, through all their national vicissitudes, clung to the notion, that the coming of the promised Messiah was to effect some great and advantageous change in their political condition. This was not the opinion of a few wild, visionary enthusiasts among them, but one on which the popular hope was founded. They clung to this hope, with an irrelaxative tenacity, under all the misfortunes and calamities which they endured. To find, therefore, their expectations suddenly blighted, that their hopes were to end in the propagation of a religion which professed none of the elements of their ancient faith,—and which, instead of being accompanied by victories, and triumphs, and other blandishments of human glory, and resulting in the exaltation of their nation above the rest of the world would advance their most inveterate enemies to an equality with themselves, was no pleasing discovery to a Jewish mind. The messengers of such intelligence could not expect to be well received, or implicitly obeyed. Such a doctrine could not be otherwise than harsh and repulsive. To extend the privileges of religion to those who did not conform to the laws and institutions of Moses, was an idea that had never before entered into the Jewish notion of moral policy.

The character of Christianity was, in other respects, repugnant to Jewish habits and prejudices. The Mosaic economy was in a high degree technical. Great stress was laid on the

ceremonial law, and its virtue and efficacy were extravagantly magnified, as the instrument of their reputation and influence. The Christian scheme, without formerly repealing the Levitical institutions, reduced them to a very low standard. Instead of a punctilious strictness and a fiery zeal in carrying out the external observances of that code, the Apostles preached faith in a crucified Redeemer, and the necessity of inward purity and moral rectitude.

Had the Apostles confined themselves to mere questions of Jewish policy, as between Judaism and Christianity, the Roman government, which despised all religion, would have interposed no interference between the parties, but have left them to settle their differences alone; but there was that in Christianity which was calculated to rouse the suspicions of a vigilant and jealous government. The Messiah, it was predicted in the Jewish Scriptures, was to come into the world armed with all the authority of regal power; and the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and other concomitants, were distinctions too refined to be entertained by governors who viewed the matter through the perverted medium of hostile representations.

The Apostles, therefore, had to contend with prejudice aided by power. They had to appease the clamours of a disappointed people, and meet the opposition of a dominant priesthood, which possessed a considerable share of municipal authority and was actuated by motives of invincible resentment. They had to do this under a government to whose power they made no pretensions, and from whose resources they could expect no aid; and, therefore, there is little in the circumstances by which the Apostles were surrounded, which could lead us to suppose that, under the difficulties and dangers with which they had to contend, and entirely destitute as

they were of force, authority, or protection, they could execute their mission with personal ease and safety.

We collect from the history of the four Evangelists, that, shortly after the Redeemer had been put to death, the Apostles, who had received a commission from him to publish his Gospel throughout the world, assembled at Jerusalem, to devise such plans and arrangements as might afford the best facilities for securing the objects of their important mission. The occasion was urgent and eventful. A renewal of effort upon a largely extended scale was imperatively demanded, or Christianity might sustain considerable loss. The Founder of their faith had been savagely murdered by the Jews, under the sanction of Roman authority ; and the chief priests had widely circulated a report that the disciples had stolen the dead body of the Saviour, and had palmed upon the world a fictitious resurrection. It was a crisis which involved the truth, the honour, and the success of Christianity. The whole body of the disciples, therefore, met in solemn conclave, to consider what was to be done. It was the celebration of a great national festival, and Jerusalem was filled with Jews from every quarter. Whilst the disciples were engaged in their momentous deliberations, and looking for aid and direction from above, "suddenly there came a sound from heaven as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled all the house where they were sitting : and there appeared unto them cloven tongues like as of fire, and it sat upon each of them, and they were ALL filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance." Here was a renewal of their ministerial charter, with an extension of powers and qualifications suited to the diversified character of the mission they were employed and empowered to carry through the world.

The report of this strange and singular occurrence at once became known, "and Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya, about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians," in fact, "devout men out of every nation under heaven" heard in their own "tongues the wonderful works of God!" Thus was an available and effective medium opened for diffusing the converting influence of Christianity far beyond the narrow confines of Judea, by an agency, which, though not ecclesiastical, would be irresistibly powerful, as having partaken of the Pentecostal infusion of Divine influence, so miraculously poured out on that memorable occasion. As was natural under such extraordinary circumstances, the ruling faction, who were ever ready to traduce whatever tended to elevate the character or promote the interests of the Gospel, attempted, by malevolent insinuations, to show, that the gift of tongues was nothing more than the mere ebullition of visionary excitement, produced by overcharged surfeiting and drunkenness—that, in fact, the disciples were "full of new wine." This, like many other attempts of the arch-adversary, defeated its own purpose. Peter met the insinuation in a manly, straightforward manner. He refuted the foul calumny, charged the murder of the Saviour upon them, proved the resurrection of Christ from their own Scriptures, pointed out his exaltation and his promise of spiritual influence, and then boldly asserted the Deity of him whom they had crucified as a malefactor. The sermon produced an amazing effect. The multitude were "pricked in their hearts," and simultaneously cried out, "Men and brethren, what shall we do?" and three thousand souls were converted from Judaism to Christianity!

Such an occurrence could scarcely fail to attract the attention of the Jewish sacerdotal authorities ; and, as the Apostles openly pursued their ministerial vocation, “the priests, and the captain of the temple, and the Sadducees came upon them, being grieved that they taught the people, and preached through Jesus the resurrection of the dead.” Two of the Apostles—Peter and John—were seized, committed to prison, and afterwards brought before a judicial tribunal ; but they were inspired with fortitude equal to the difficulty of the exigence, and to the threats of punishment they temperately, but firmly, replied : “Whether it be right in the sight of God to hearken unto you more than unto God, judge ye ; for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.”—Acts iv., 19, 20.

The death of Stephen began a new epoch in the history of Christianity. A young man named Saul, who had signalised himself by his hostility to the new religion, applied for and obtained a commission from the council at Jerusalem to proceed to Damascus,—whither, it seems, many of the early converts had sought refuge from persecution,—and seize upon all persons, irrespective of sex, age, or condition, who were found to have embraced the new faith. His miraculous conversion to Christianity on the way so strongly excited the fierce resentment of the Jews at Damascus, that, to escape their ungovernable rage, he had to be let down in a basket from an upper window without the walls, and so repair privately to Jerusalem.

There is a remarkable fact connected with the history of this period. At the time of Stephen’s martyrdom a fierce and furious persecution raged against the infant church at Jerusalem : “and they” (the Christians) “were all scattered abroad throughout the region of Judea and Samaria, *except*

the Apostles" (Acts viii., 1), who probably remained at Jerusalem to devise such legislative measures as the eventful circumstances of the times might appear to render necessary. "And they that were scattered abroad went everywhere *preaching the Word*."—Acts viii., 4. That their ministry was a Lay Ministry, no one will probably deny. The Apostles remained at Jerusalem, and the converts thus "scattered abroad" preached the religion of Jesus wherever they went; It is added by the Scripture historian, that "the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord." On this point Archdeacon Paley, who cannot be suspected of favouring Lay Preaching, says: "Their preaching was in effect the preaching of the *twelve*; for it was so far carried on in concert and correspondence with them, that, when they heard of the success of their emissaries in a particular country, they sent two of their number to complete and confirm the mission." "We find also," says that eminent writer, "that those who had been expelled from Jerusalem by the persecution which raged there, travelled as far as Phœnice, Cyprus, and Antioch; and, lastly, we find Jerusalem again the centre of the mission, the place whither the preachers returned from their several excursions, where they reported the conduct and effects of their ministry, where questions of public concern were canvassed and settled, and whence directions were sought and *teachers sent forth*."

CHAPTER VI.

OPENING OF THE GOSPEL DOOR TO THE GENTILES — INTRODUCTION OF CHRISTIANITY INTO EUROPE — SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL OVER EUROPEAN CITIES — CHARACTER OF ST. PAUL — CHARACTER OF CHRISTIANITY — RECAPITULATION OF THE CONQUESTS OF THE GOSPEL DURING THE FIRST THIRTY YEARS OF ITS PUBLICATION.

UP to this time the first preachers of the Gospel had confined their ministry exclusively to the Jews ; but an event occurred at this point of the New Testament history, which gave to Christianity an entirely new feature. The exclusive and unsocial character of the Jewish economy, which forbade all intercourse with strangers, interposed an insuperable bar to the spread of Christianity among the Gentiles. The conversion of the Ethiopian eunuch, under the ministry of Philip, the deacon, and his admission into the Christian Church by the initiatory rite of baptism, was an event which would not be likely to meet with much sympathy from the Apostles, who were still deeply tinctured with the prejudices of their nation. Cesarea, a town of sufficient importance to be made the residence of a Roman governor, contained a mixed population of Jews and Gentiles. Cornelius, a devout centurion, stationed with the Roman cohorts in that city, was brought under the saving influence of religion,—whether through the instrumentality of Philip, the deacon, who exercised his ministry in that town for several years,* or otherwise, does not appear. Whilst Cornelius was engaged in his devotional

* Compare Acts viii., 40, with Acts xxi., 8.

exercises, an angel appeared to him, and said, "Cornelius, thy prayers and thine alms are come up for a memorial before God. And now send men to Joppa, and call for one Simon, whose surname is Peter; he lodgeth with one Simon, a tanner, whose house is by the sea-side; he shall tell thee what thou oughtest to do." Whilst the messengers from Cornelius were on their way to Joppa, Peter was favoured with a most extraordinary vision, which was thrice repeated, to impress the important instruction it was intended to convey the more deeply on the mind of this slowly-assenting Apostle.—Acts x., 9, *et seq.* As he was wondering what the vision could mean, the messengers from Cornelius arrived at Simon's house, and inquired for Peter; and the Spirit said to Peter, "Behold three men seek thee; arise, therefore, and get thee down, and go with them, doubting nothing, for I have sent them." Peter's prejudices at once did homage to Christianity. He went to Cesarea, obtained a solution of the mysterious vision, and preached to Cornelius, and to the company whom he had collected, the glorious doctrine of remission of sins through the atonement and in the name of Jesus Christ; and, at the close of that instructive sermon, "the Holy Ghost fell on all them which heard the Word," and they were at once baptised, and added to the church.—Acts x., 44, *et seq.* Thus were the covenants of promise thrown open alike to Jew and Gentile, the middle wall of partition was broken down, and all restrictions to the general spread of Christianity were removed at once and for ever.

For some considerable time after the introduction of Christianity, the Apostles, and other preachers of the Gospel, continued to labour within the limits of Proconsular Asia. The extension of their ministry beyond those limits broke upon them by degrees. In Acts xvi., we learn that, after Paul

and Silas had left Antioch, they visited the several churches in Galatia, Phrygia, and the interadjacent country, and were preparing to go into Bithynia, on the shores of the Euxine Sea, when an extraordinary interposition induced them to alter their course, and take a route which eventually led them to cross the European boundary by way of the *Ægean* Sea, and proceed to Philippi, a Roman colony in Macedonia. The introduction of the Gospel into Philippi was marked by some remarkable circumstances. The first attempts to plant the standard of the Cross presented few indications of success. On the Sabbath-day after their arrival, the Apostles visited an oratory, without the city, on the banks of a river, where a few pious women met for devotional purposes, to whom they made known the Gospel of our common salvation. The effect was the conversion of Lydia, a person of some property engaged in trade, and who had probably chosen Philippi as a residence for commercial purposes. She at once opened her house for preaching, and, with her family, became the *nucleus* of a Christian Church. The dispossession of a Python from a young female who interrupted the Apostles in their ministry, raised a violent persecution against them. The Apostles, without even the formality of a trial, were scourged and imprisoned. An earthquake, with other concomitants of Divine power, attested the authority of their mission, and the jailer and his family were added to the infant church, as monuments of the power of Divine grace.

Having visited Amphipolis, Apollonia, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens, Corinth, Rome, and other European cities, where, with various degrees of success, Paul and his missionary colleagues preached the everlasting Gospel, they returned to Jerusalem to recount their labours and renew their ministerial commission.

What an illustrious instance of the power and influence of converting grace do we find in the great Apostle of the Gentiles. How dignified and noble his character ! Where shall we find such genuine disinterestedness as his—such an utter renunciation of self ! In all the great outlines of his extraordinary life, whether viewed as a Christian or as a Christian minister, he has no counterpart among men. He stands solitary and alone ! We trace him, in the Gospel history, travelling from country to country in the prosecution of his generous design ; encountering every extremity of peril ; enduring every variety of hardship ; submitting to every kind and degree of privation, reproach, and suffering ; stoned, beaten, scourged, and his life in constant jeopardy ; when driven from one city, preaching in another ; spending his whole time in the work of the ministry, sacrificing on this shrine his profit, pleasure, ease, safety ; unswerving from his course by the difficulties with which he had to contend ; unsubdued by watchings, weariness, hunger, thirst ; unintimidated by bonds, imprisonments, scourgings, and death ; in seasons of the greatest peril displaying undaunted courage, quenchless zeal, and indomitable perseverance. His behaviour is everywhere calm, dignified, and rational ; adapted to the varied and varying exigencies of his ministerial course, and throwing a reflex lustre on the moral and social character of Christianity.

The following remarks by, Hug, on the character of St. Paul, will be read with interest :—"This most violent man, having such terrible propensities, whose turbulent impulses rendered him of a most enterprising character, would have become nothing better than a John of Gishald, a blood-thirsty zealot, breathing out threatenings and slaughter, had not his soul been changed. The harsh tone of his mind

inclined him to the principles of Pharisaism, which had all the appearance of severity, and was the predominant party among the Jews. Nature had not withholden from him the external endowments of eloquence, although he afterwards spoke very modestly of them. At Lystra, he was deemed the tutelar god of eloquence. This character, qualified for great things, but, not master of himself from excess of internal power, was an extreme of human dispositions, and, according to the natural course, was prone to absolute extremities. His religion was a destructive zeal; his anger was fierceness; his fury required victims. A ferocity so boisterous did not psychologically qualify him for a Christian, nor for a philanthropist; but, least of all, for a quietly-enduring man. He, nevertheless, became all this on his conversion to Christianity, and each bursting emotion of his mind subsided directly into a well-regulated and noble character. Formerly hasty and irritable, now only spirited and resolved; formerly violent, now full of energy and enterprising; once ungovernably refractory against everything that obstructed him, now only persevering; once fanatical and morose, now only serious; once a harsh zealot, now fearing God; formerly unrelenting, deaf to sympathy and commiseration, now himself acquainted with tears, which he had seen without effect in others. Formerly the friend of none, now the brother of mankind; benevolent, compassionate, sympathising, yet never weak—always great; in the midst of sadness and sorrow, manly and noble; so he showed himself at his deeply moving departure from Miletus.—Acts xx. It is like the departure of Moses, like the resignation of Samuel, sincere and heart-felt, full of self-recollection, and, in the midst of pain, full of dignity. His writings are a true expression of his character, with regard to the tone predominant in them.

Severity, manly seriousness, and sentiments which ennoble the heart are interchanged with mildness, affability, and sympathy ; and their transitions are such as nature begets in the heart of a man penetrated by his subject, noble and discerning. He exhorts, reproaches, and consoles again ; he attacks with energy, urges with impetuosity, and again he speaks kindly to the soul ; he displays his finer feelings for the welfare of others, his forbearance, and his fear of afflicting anybody—all as the subject, time, opposite disposition, and circumstances require. There prevails throughout in them an importuning language, an earnest and lively communication. Rom. i., 26—32, is a comprehensive and vigorous description of morals. His antitheses, Rom. ii., 21—24, 2 Corinth. iv., 8—12, vi., 9—11, ix., 22—30 ; his enumerations, 1 Corinth. xiii., 4—10, 2 Corinth. vi., 4—7, 2 Tim. iii., 1—5, Ephes. vi., 4—7 v., 3—6 ; his gradations, Rom. viii., 29—30, Titus iii., 3, 4 ; the interrogations, exclamations, and comparisons, sometimes animate his language even as to give a visible existence to it. That, however, which we principally perceive in Paul, and from which his whole actions and operations become intelligible, is the peculiar impression which the idea of a universal religion has wrought upon his mind. This idea of establishing a religion for the world had not so profoundly engrossed any soul, nowhere kindled so much vigour and projected it with such a constant energy. In this he was no man's scholar ; this he had immediately received from the Spirit of his Master ; it was a spark of the Divine light which enkindled him. It was this which never allowed him to remain in Palestine and in Syria—which so powerfully impelled him to foreign parts. The portion of some others was Judea and its environs ; but his mission was directed to the nations, and his allotment was the whole

of the heathen world. Thus he began his career among the different nations of Asia Minor, and, when this limit also became too confined for him, he went with equal confidence to Europe, among other nations, ordinances, sciences, and customs ; and here likewise he finally, with the same indefatigable spirit, circulated his plans, even to the pillars of Hercules. In this manner Paul prepared the overthrow of two religions—that of his ancestors, and that of the heathen.”

Such was Christianity, in its rise and progress, during the Apostolic dynasty. For ages it illumined the world, carrying light into the regions of darkness and mildness into the habitations of cruelty. It “beheld the foundations of every pagan temple shake ; the statue of every false god totter on its base ; the priest fly from his falling shrine, and the heathen oracle become dumb for ever.” For three centuries, power, leagued with power, employed every artifice that human ingenuity could devise to paralyse its energies and crush its rising growth ; but, like the rolling tide, impatient of control, it bade defiance to artificial restraints, and swept away every embankment of human construction. It is true the kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers took counsel together, against the Lord, and against his Anointed ; but he that sitteth in the circle of the heavens laughed at their puny attempts ; the Lord had them in derision.

We affect no surprise that Christianity gradually carried its ramifications over every country, into which its leavening influence prepared the way for its ready admission. Expansion and perpetuity were essential elements in its practical composition. For, although, in most instances, its entrance into any place was scowled upon,—its character maligned,—its supporters traduced, simply because its objects were mis-

understood, and consequently misrepresented ; yet, in proportion as its advancing light beamed upon any country, the intelligence of its converts was elevated, the tone of their character sublimated, the standard of their morals raised, and their social duties and religious obligations performed and discharged with far better results to the general community, and with incomparably higher satisfaction in their relation to, and bearing upon, the interests of another world. Had Christianity rested its pretensions on human speculations, on theories of philosophy or deductions of reason ; had its progress been traced to the prevalence of certain opinions which had gained possession of the public mind, then our postulatam must have stood on different ground, and we must have had recourse to another and totally different class of arguments to account for its amazing spread and eventual establishment. But the irrefragable proof of Christianity is found in its irresistible power ; a proof which has successfully rebutted the multitudinous aspersions cast upon it by infidelity, from the acrid bitterness of Celsus, to the disgusting ribaldry of Paine.

The following recapitulation contains a condensed summary of the progress of Christianity, within the first thirty years after the ascension of the Saviour. The first assembly of Christ's disciples which we meet with, and which was but a few days after the Saviour's ascension, consisted of "one hundred and twenty." About a week after this "three thousand" were added in one day ; and the number of Christians publicly baptised, and publicly associating together, was very soon increased to "five thousand." "Multitudes of both men and women continued to be added ;" "disciples multiplied greatly," and "a great company of the priests were obedient to the faith ;" and these great and important accessions to

the infant church of Christ, it is commonly believed, took place within two years from the resurrection of the Redeemer.

In consequence of a violent persecution which raged against the church at Jerusalem, the converts were driven from that city, and dispersed throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria. Wherever they went they took their religion with them ; for the Evangelist Luke records that "they that were scattered abroad, went everywhere preaching the Word." The effect of this preaching comes afterwards to be noticed, where the historian, in the course of his narrative, is led to observe, that *then* (that is, about three years posterior to this) "the churches had rest throughout all Judea, and Galilee, and Samaria, and were edified, and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." This brought the church down to the sixth year of its age.

It was not at that time revealed to the Apostles, that they were at liberty to make a tender of the provisions of Divine mercy to the world at large. Hitherto, their preaching had been confined to Jews, to Jewish proselytes, and to Samaritans. That "mystery," as St. Paul calls it, was revealed to Peter by a special miracle. It appears to have been about seven years after Christ's ascension that the Gospel was preached to the Gentiles at Cesarea. One year after this, a great multitude of Gentiles were converted at Antioch, in Syria. The terms employed by the historian are these : "A great number believed, and turned unto the Lord ;" "much people was added unto the Lord ;" "the Apostles, Barnabas and Paul, taught much people." Upon Herod's death, which happened in the next year, it is observed, "that the Word of God grew and multiplied." Three years from this time, upon the preaching of Paul at Iconium, the metropolis of

Lycaonia, "a great multitude, both of Jews and Greeks, believed ;" and afterwards, in the course of this very progress, he is represented as "making many disciples" at Derbe, a principal city in the same district. Three years after this, which brings us to the sixteenth year after the Ascension, the Apostles wrote to the Gentile converts in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia,—with which letter Paul travelled through those countries, and found the different Churches "established in the faith, and increased in numbers daily." From Asia, the Apostle proceeded into Greece, where, soon after his arrival in Macedonia, we find him at Thessalonica ; in which city, "some of the Jews believed, and of the devout Greeks a great multitude." We meet here with an accidental hint of the general progress of the Christian Mission, in the exclamation of the tumultuous Jews of Thessalonica, "that they, who had turned the world upside down, were come thither also." At Berea, the next city at which St. Paul arrived, the historian, who was present, informs us that "*many* of the Jews believed." The next eighteen months of St. Paul's ministry were spent at Corinth. Of his success in that city we receive the following intimations : "That *many* of the Corinthians believed and were baptised ;" and "that it was revealed to the Apostle, by Christ, that he had *much* people in that city." Within less than a year after his departure from Corinth, and twenty-five years after the Ascension, St. Paul fixed his station at Ephesus, for the space of two years and something more. The effect of his ministry in that city and neighbourhood drew from the historian a reflection—how "mightily grew the Word of God and prevailed !" And we find Demetrius, the head of an insurgent cabal, alarmed at the progress of Christianity, complaining, "that not only at Ephesus, but also throughout all Asia, this Paul hath per-

suaded and turned away much people." Besides these direct accounts, there occurs, incidentally, mention of converts at Rome, Alexandria, Athens, Cyprus, Cyrene, Macedonia, Philippi, and other places.

The Christian institution, which properly *began* only after the Saviour's removal from the world, had, before the end of thirty years spread itself throughout Judea, Galilee, and Samaria, and almost all the numerous districts of Lesser Asia, through Greece and the islands of the Ægean Sea, along the sea coast of Africa, and had extended itself to Rome and into Italy. At Antioch in Syria, Joppa, Ephesus, Corinth, Thessalonica, Berea, Iconium, Derbe, Antioch in Pisidia, Lydda, Saron, the number of converts is intimated by the expressions, "a great number," "great multitudes," "much people." Converts are mentioned, without any designation of their number, at Tyre, Cesarea, Troas, Athens, Philippi, Lystra, Damascus. During all this time, Jerusalem continued not only the centre of the mission, but a principal seat of the religion ; for when St. Paul returned thither, at the conclusion of the period of which we are now considering the accounts, the other Apostles pointed out to him as a reason of his compliance with their advice, "how many thousands there were in that city who believed."—(See *Paley's Evidences of Christianity.*)

PART II.

THE ORIGIN, CHARACTER, ADAPTATION, AND USEFULNESS OF THE METHODIST LAY OR LOCAL MINISTRY.

“How beautiful upon the mountains are the feet of him that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace ; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation ; that saith unto Zion, thy God reigneth !”—Isaiah lii., 7.

“For after that, in the wisdom of God, the world by wisdom knew not God, it pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe.”—1 Corinth. i., 21.

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CHAPTER I.

OBJECTS AND DISCHARGE OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—EFFECTS OF WHITFIELD'S PREACHING—FRENCH, SCOTCH, IRISH, AMERICAN, AND ENGLISH PREACHERS CONTRASTED—SERMONS OF TILLOTSON, BARROW, BLAIR, AND PALEY DESCRIBED—ANECDOTE OF GARRICK—STATE OF RELIGION AT THE OPENING OF THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY—ORIGIN OF METHODISM—OPENING OF THE FOUNDRY—COMMENCEMENT OF CLASS CONTRIBUTIONS—MR. WESLEY'S SEPARATION FROM THE MORAVIANS.

“See, forth he comes, his holy office given,
Herald of Christ, high harbinger of heaven !
While poor and rich, the soldier and the sage,
The bloom of youth, and hoary locks of age,
In gathering crowds Messiah's name adore,
And rush all trembling to the sacred shore ;
Bend with pale reverence 'neath the sprinkled wave,
Their crimes confess, and hail the power to save.”

THE ministry of the Gospel is unquestionably an ordinance of Divine appointment. Its paramount design was to bring about a reconciliation between an offended God and offending man ; to effect not merely a temporary suspension of hostilities between the conflicting parties, but to ratify a permanent peace, on such broad and comprehensive grounds, as would bring the parties together on terms of mutual amity and reciprocal intercourse. It is natural to suppose, that a Ministry so immeasurably important in its present bearings and future results, should be so modified and arranged in its

essential constitution and working power, as to discharge the diversified duties which its fulfilment requires, with a commanding reference to the intermediate purposes and ultimate results contemplated in that appointment. In a complex community like that which peoples our earth, possessing an indefinite variety of views, interests, and aims, the Ministry of the Gospel should, in its working plans, adapt itself to the diversified circumstances in which it is brought to act ; for, although it cannot be denied that the various modes of pulpit administration, both in and out of the Established Church, have many bonds and analogies in common, yet it would argue a palpable ignorance of the moral and spiritual economy of man, to contend that the discharge of ministerial functions, under all the varieties of circumstances to which the Ministry of the Gospel extends its application, should be brought within one uniform category. Such a conclusion would be as absurd as that which is not unfrequently palmed on human credulity by certain charlatan pathologists, who recommend the application of one class of remedies for every description of constitution and disease.

In no department of life, within the limits of the mental domain, is such a diversity of talent employed, and such a versatility of mode adopted, as in the Christian Ministry. And yet, looking at the model as laid down by the Saviour, it may be clearly perceived that the qualifications for the discharge of its important and responsible duties have far less to do with the head than with the heart. The secret of the prevalence, power, and effect of the Apostolic Ministry, appears to have been found in the combination of two simple elements ; namely, purity of motive and plainness of manner ; and yet, from the structure of the sermons preached or printed by those divines, in this and other countries, who

have drawn most largely on the public admiration, one might almost imagine that the Saviour's model, which was implicitly followed by the Apostles, and by their successors for centuries, was to be regarded by modern divines in the "breach, rather than in the observance." The sermons of the most distinguished French preachers, with a few exceptions, are extremely imaginative ;* rich in the decorations of verbal drapery ; embellished with attractive imagery, with beautiful representations of Divine Truth, and with the vivid exhibitions of the diversified subjects which Christianity embodies. But they seem to lose their vital power in the enchantment of plastic descriptions ; the practical and soul-elevating influence of experimental religion in the brilliant flashes of an exuberant fancy, and the warm and generous glow of spiritual affections in the clear, but cold illustrations with which their sermons abound and are emblazoned.

* There are a few instances in which the imagination has been most effectively employed in furtherance of the great objects of truth. That extraordinary preacher, George Whitfield, was once addressing a mixed multitude at Philadelphia, on the other side of the Atlantic ; and not perceiving any outward signs of inwrought conviction, he suddenly stopped, and with great solemnity of manner informed his auditory that the Archangel Gabriel was just about to return to heaven without the news of a single conversion. After a short pause, he added, with peculiar earnestness of manner, " Will you let him go ? " A poor man, whose soul had been pierced, and whose face was diffused with tears of penitential contrition, immediately cried out, " No, sir ! I pray ! " Whitfield, with one of those master-strokes of eloquence for which as a preacher he was so remarkable, cried out, " Stop, Gabriel ! stop ! and carry the tidings to heaven ! " The effect was electric.—William Dawson excelled most of his ministerial contemporaries in the imaginative mode. His images, always true to life, often produced the most thrilling effect. Who that ever heard his graphic description of the man carried down the fearful rapids, from Lake Erie to the terrific falls of Niagara, can forget the varied feelings it called forth as the description proceeded, and especially the wild rush of emotions when the catastrophe was announced ? In these men the imaginative faculty was often rendered an effective auxiliary to the other agencies of the soul.

The Scotch divines seem to take their pulpit cue from the bold and striking features of their picturesque country. Cool, calculating, and argumentative, they are the very antipodes of their Celtic brethren. In preaching, they seldom allow the imagination to occupy the seat of judgment. In their estimation, stern truth needs not the aid of artificial ornament ; and, although they occasionally display an expansion of intellect, a loftiness of conception, and a vigour of delineation which unmistakeably indicate great mental capacity, yet, in their pulpit discourses, their language is usually simple and unembellished, and seems to come nearer to the plain, pointed, energetic style of the Apostolic Ministry than most of the churches of modern times. The preachers of Hibernia differ very considerably from those either of Gaul or Caledonia. Irish preachers, for the most part, are extremely ardent, fervid, zealous, and not unfrequently send out scintillations of sparkling brightness, which at once delight and astonish their hearers. Quick in perception, sanguine in temperament, energetic in action, full of the excitement which is created and fed by their native enthusiasm, their fire and feeling have little to do with the intricate researches of thought, or the abstruse deductions of reason. It has been said that an Irishman's soul is his Aristotle, and to make you think as he thinks, is to make you feel as he feels. American preachers, though imaginative, are unenergetic. Their descriptive powers, which have been denominated a kind of mental mechanism, are cultivated with considerable effect ; and as their style is light, and abounds with striking illustrations, their sermons are generally of a highly popular character. They appear to form a link between the French and Irish preachers, possessing a good deal of the fancy of the former, with some small portion of the enthusiasm

of the latter. With them elocution appears to be carefully studied, and hence, American oratory, though dull, is florid. English preachers may be said to combine many of the qualities of these different divines. Sometimes their sermons contain great originality and depth of thought, with a studied elaboration of style. Many of the leading preachers in Non-conformist communities are men of first-rate talent, and are entitled to be classed among the most distinguished *lumières* of this or any other country. If the growth of transforming religion were to be measured by the high standard of pulpit acquirements, Britain would immeasurably take the lead among the nations of the earth.

In the published sermons of our most admired English divines, we discover very great diversity of style and composition. Though their sermons occupy the divinity compartment in every private library of importance, and are set up as standards of appeal in questions of doctrinal controversy, yet they exhibit some of the imperfection which is inseparable from all human productions.* The sermons of South are witty and playful, rather than dignified and profound. It is true that the prevailing vices of the age are occasionally exhibited, assailed, and denounced; but the serio-comic view in which the learned doctor occasionally indulges, almost leads one to imagine that his sermons were intended for stage representation, rather than for spiritual effect.† The sermons

* The cream of English divinity is to be found in the works of Ambrose, Taylor, Charnock, Howe, Hall, Horneck, Baxter, and other preachers and writers of that class, who, though their ponderous tomes are in the possession of a few spiritual clergymen, yet their quaintness of style and pointedness of application have placed them under the general ban.

† It is related that a certain bishop once asked Garrick, the English Comus, how it came to pass, that, whilst theatrical representations produced such powerful effects on the passions and feelings of an audience, the most affecting appeals from the pulpit were listened to without emotion

of Tillotson are prolix and cumbrous. In many respects they are deservedly esteemed, and are an important addition to the divinity department of our national literature. They are as completely surcharged with solid matter, as though their contents had been packed under the pressure of an hydraulic machine of fifty-horse power. It must, however, be admitted, that they are admired rather for their style, than for their application ; and, consequently, that, though their clearness is appreciated by the understanding, and their truth acknowledged by the judgment, yet they seldom gain access to the inner chambers of the heart. The sermons of Barrow are diffuse and heavy. With Barrow, points of divinity are treated very much like problems in Euclid—both are reduced to mathematical demonstration. His great mind was cast in a metaphysical mould, and hence, every class of truth was measured by one common standard ; and yet, his versatility of illustration is remarkable, as he has given twelve sermons on the text, “I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content” (Phil. iv., 11),—a lesson which, by the way, many find much more difficult to acquire than either Greek or Latin. Blair’s sermons are greatly admired in many circles. His style is fluent, and his language ornate. His sermon on “Keep thy heart with all diligence, for out of it are the issues of life,” and the one on “Father, the hour is come,” embody great elevation of sentiment and beauty of delineation. The latter sermon has many touches of the sublime, and it can scarcely be read without drawing upon the fountains of the soul. But, still, his sermons are

and without effect. The answer of Garrick contains an admonitory solution of the problem of that episcopal dignitary : “My lord, we are in earnest !” It is as much as if he had said, “We treat fiction as truth, but you treat truth as fiction ; we invest imagery with the force of reality, but you clothe reality with the trappings of imagery.”

generally deficient in their appeals to the heart : they keep up a running fire of small arms upon the outworks, but they seldom bring the heavy artillery to play upon the citadel. Paley's sermons are lamentably defective ; and it is difficult to understand how a man that could write so admirably on "Natural Theology," should be so little acquainted with the theology of the soul. But there are two kinds of divinity—the speculative and the experimental : one is the divinity of the head, the other the divinity of the heart ; the former is acquired at the feet of Gamaliel, the latter at the feet of Christ !

The opening of the eighteenth century was a period of great moral darkness and degeneracy. The infidelity of France and the neology of Germany had found great sympathy in this country. The fountains of literature were poisoned, and the destructive effects were everywhere seen in the melancholy wreck of moral principle. Much of the current divinity was either scholastic or polemical, and that which was of a more practical character was either too profound or too prolix for the popular taste. The clergy set up but few counter-checks to prevent the spread of infidelity and irreligion. Indeed, many of them, without formally renouncing Christianity, lived in such an habitual violation of its laws, and contradiction to its spirit, that, had their ministry been faithfully discharged, their own lives would have afforded the most palpable ground for rebuke and condemnation. All classes, from the prince to the peasant, seemed to have caught the moral epidemic ; and although the faithful among the Nonconforming preachers denounced from their respective pulpits the crying sins of the multitude, yet their thunders were either unheard or unheeded.

In the year 1720, Mr. John Wesley, then only seventeen

years of age, was entered a student at Christ's Church College, Oxford; and on the 19th September, 1725, he received Deacon's Orders, as Bachelor of Arts, under Dr. Potter, then Bishop of Oxford. On the 17th March, 1726, he was elected Fellow of Lincoln College, and in the following year received his degree as Master of Arts. He was ordained Priest by Bishop Potter, on the 22nd September, 1728.

In the beginning of the year 1729, the Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, and two other collegians, were brought under the power and influence of spiritual religion. Although at that time the elder University was untainted with the heretical dogmas which have since given it such an unenviable notoriety in the religious world, yet, its boasted orthodoxy had little affinity with the spirituality of the New Testament. About the beginning of that year, these two excellent men, with Mr. Morgan, a commoner of Christ's Church, and Mr. Kirkham, of Merton College, set apart two or three evenings in the week to read, for their mutual aid and spiritual edification, the Greek Testament. They were subsequently joined by several pupils of the Messrs. Wesley; by Mr. Ingham, Mr. Broughton, Mr. Clayton, Mr. Hervey, and the justly celebrated Mr. George Whitfield; altogether, about fourteen in number. Their reading was reduced to three heads of classification; namely, grammatical, analytical, and exegetical. Their rules of life were remarkably strict and irrelaxative. They visited the sick, and the prisoners in the county gaol; observed the Wednesday's and Friday's fasts of the Primitive Church, and partook of the Lord's Supper once in every week.

It was scarcely to be expected that the strictness of their self-imposed regulations and the remarkable sanctity of their lives would escape public observation; and a Fellow of

Merton College applied to the little band the distinctive appellation which the Connexion has since borne, in allusion to the great exactitude with which their ascetic rules of life were observed and carried out.

As Mr. Wesley's mind gradually unfolded its gigantic capabilities, he took higher and broader views of the duties and obligations which Christianity imposes. He saw the world around him sunk in a deep and ominous sleep,—lying in the calm of death, on the very brink of the yielding precipice which overhangs the gulf of perdition. He perceived that, among the higher classes especially, attempts were made “to negotiate a treaty between the service of Christ and the service of Satan ; to reconcile the claims of Christianity with those of sin ; to compromise the high and holy principles of religion ; to amalgamate sensual pleasures with spiritual joys ; to live on amicable terms with Christ and Belial ; to keep up a running intercourse with both worlds ; and to mingle elements which possess, in their very nature and essence, the principles of absolute and eternal contrariety.” His eye affected his heart. His sympathies were awakened, and he soon framed the skeleton of an enterprise second only to that which resulted in the glorious Reformation. Like Luther, Huss, and other master spirits, unchecked by opposition, unintimidated by the threatening aspects around him, he began at once to publish through the land the distinguishing doctrine of a present, full, free, and eternal salvation, on the simple condition of faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. As in the days of the Saviour's personal ministry, the temple authorities first took the alarm, and closed the doors of the different churches against him. He then began, in London, Bristol, and other places, to preach in the open air, with a success that greatly exceeded his utmost expectations.

It was on the 11th November, 1739, that the first Methodist chapel was opened for public worship. That was the celebrated Foundry,* in Moorfields, London, purchased from Government, in which the thunderbolts of war had long been manufactured; but which, for the future, was to resound with the high praises of the Prince of Peace. A chapel having been built at Bristol, it became a serious question how the increasing pecuniary difficulties should be met, and Mr. Wesley convened the Bristol Society to bring that question fairly before them. On his asking, "How shall we pay the debt upon the preaching-house?" Captain Foy stood up and said, "Let every one in the Society give a penny a week, and it will be easy done." "But many of them," said one, "have not a penny to give." "True," said the Captain;

* The Foundry, with which is associated some of the best recollections of Methodism, was situated in what now bears the name of Windmill-street, and is parallel with the City-road, abutting on the north-west corner of Finsbury-square. It stood on the east side of Windmill-street, about twenty yards from the corner of Providence-row. Including the coach-house and yard, the front dimensions of the premises were about one hundred and twenty feet, from north to south; and about one hundred feet in depth, from west to east. Behind the chapel, on the ground floor, was the band-room, being about eighty feet long, and twenty feet wide; near the south entrance to which stood the book-room, for the sale of Mr. Wesley's publications. Over part of the band-room were three rooms, two of which were occupied by assistant ministers (superintendents), and the third was used for electrifying afflicted persons and other occasional purposes. Mr. Wesley's apartments were a storey higher, and over the rooms just mentioned. The large room, called the band-room, would accommodate about three hundred persons. In that room, during the winter, at five o'clock, the morning service was held. The bands met on Thursday evenings, after preaching. On every Wednesday and Friday, at two o'clock, there used to be a meeting for intercession and prayer. The north end of the room was used as the school, being fitted up with desks, &c. The dwelling-house was occupied by some of the preachers, and by the domestic servants. There were no pews in the body of the chapel; but in front of the pulpit were about ten or more fixed seats, with back rails,—the front and last occupied by men, the others by women. Under the front gallery were free seats for women, and underneath the north and south galleries, for men. The front gallery was for women, the north and south galleries for men.

“then put ten or twelve of them to me ; let each of these give what he can weekly, and I will supply what is wanting.” Many others made the same offer ; so Mr. Wesley divided the Societies among them, assigning a class of about twelve persons to each of these, who were termed Leaders. Thus the fulcrum and lever-power of Methodism was effectively brought into play.

Up to the middle of the year 1740, Mr. Wesley had been in close connection with the *Unitas Fratrum*, or Moravian brethren ; but, in July, of that year, doctrinal disputes arose between Mr. Peter Boehler and Mr. Molther, the heads of that community, and Mr. Wesley, chiefly on the nature and operation of saving faith, Mr. Molther entertaining Antinomian views, which led to a separation. The publication, by Mr. Wesley, of a sermon against the Calvinist notion of predestination, was the primary occasion of Mr. Whitfield's withdrawal from the ranks of Methodism.

CHAPTER II.

ORIGIN OF LAY PREACHING AMONG THE METHODISTS—OPINION OF MR. WESLEY'S MOTHER ON LAY PREACHING—MR. WESLEY'S DEFENCE OF LAY PREACHING—SPREAD OF METHODISM—MR. WESLEY'S TALENTS—CHARACTER OF THE EARLY PREACHERS—MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS OF LOCAL PREACHERS—BUNYAN'S PREACHING.

ALTHOUGH at an early period in the history of Methodism Mr. Wesley called laymen to his aid, as preachers of the Gospel, to act in conjunction with those who were ordained, and publish through the land the tidings of salvation, yet it was not until he felt the pressure of circumstances from without that his prejudices on this point did homage to his judgment.

In the *Life of Mr. Wesley*, prefixed to the edition of his *Sermons* published in 1838, the following account is given of the circumstances out of which Lay Preaching in the Methodist Connexion arose :—

“Several preachers, not episcopally ordained, were now employed by Mr. Wesley to assist in the growing work, which already had swelled beyond even his and his brother's active powers suitably to supply with the ministration of the Word of God. Mr. Charles Wesley had discouraged this from the beginning, and even he himself hesitated ; but with John the promotion of religion was the first concern, and church order the second, although inferior in consideration to that only. With Charles these views were often reversed. In the year 1741, Mr. Wesley had to caution his brother against joining the Moravians, after the example of Mr. Gambold, to which he was at times inclined ; and adds, ‘I am not clear that Brother Maxfield should not expound at Greyhound-lane ; nor can I as yet do without him. Our clergymen have increased full as much as the preachers.’ Mr. Maxfield's preaching had the strongest sanction of the Countess of Huntingdon ; but so little of design, with reference to the forming of a sect,

had Mr. Wesley in the employment of Mr. Maxfield, that in his own absence from London he had only authorised him to pray with the society, and to advise them as might be needful ; and upon his beginning to preach he hastened back to silence him. On this his mother addressed him :—‘ John, you know what my sentiments have been. You cannot suspect me of favouring readily anything of this kind. But take care what you do with respect to that young man, for he is as surely called of God to preach as you are. Examine what have been the fruits of his preaching, and hear him also yourself.’ He took her advice, and could not venture to forbid him.”

Having once broken through the restrictions of ecclesiastical order, in the employment of Lay, or unordained, Preachers, Mr. Wesley proceeded to carry out a plan, which, though it formed no part of his original design and was regarded by him with very considerable repugnance, yet, as it appeared to him to be necessary to meet the exigencies which were springing up around him in every direction, he adopted as one of the administrative elements in the working economy of Methodism ; and which, though unacknowledged by the Conference, has, in its effects, been very much like the introduction of the *fly-wheel* into some departments of heavy machinery, to give increasing momentum to its working speed and power. It ought not to be forgotten, especially by Local Preachers, that the suggestions of the mother of Mr. Wesley, a woman of exalted piety and extraordinary endowments, led to the institution of a Lay Ministry ; to which, in conjunction with the Lay Pastorate, Methodism owes by far the greater part of its numerical strength and its internal stability. After Mr. Maxfield had begun to preach, others followed in the same irregular course ; first Mr. Thomas Richards, next Mr. Thomas Westall, and shortly afterwards the celebrated John Nelson ; who all, except the first, died in the work.

“Mr. Wesley’s defence of himself on this point may be considered irrefutable, and turns upon the disappointment of the hope he had

ever cherished, that the parochial clergy would take the charge of those who in different places had been turned to God by his ministry and that of his fellow-labourers :—

“ ‘It pleased God,’ says Mr. Wesley, ‘by two or three ministers of the Church of England to call many sinners to repentance, who, in several parts, were undeniably turned from a course of sin to a course of holiness.

“ ‘The ministers of the places where this was done, ought to have received those ministers with open arms, and to have taken those persons who had just begun to serve God into their particular care ; watching over them in tender love, lest they should fall back into the snare of the devil.

“ ‘Instead of this, the greater part spoke of those ministers as if the devil, not God, had sent them. Some repelled them from the Lord’s table ; others stirred up the people against them, representing them, even in their public discourses, as fellows not fit to live ; Papists, heretics, traitors, conspirators against their king and country.

“ ‘And how did they watch over the sinners lately reformed ? Even as a leopard watcheth over his prey. They drove some of them from the Lord’s table, to which till now they had no desire to approach. They preached all manner of evil concerning them, openly cursing them in the name of the Lord. They turned many out of their work, persuaded others to do so too, and harassed them in all manner of ways.

“ ‘The event was, that some were wearied out, and so turned back to the vomit again ; and then these good pastors gloried over them, and endeavoured to shake others by their example.

“ ‘When the ministers by whom God had helped them before came again to those places, great part of their work was to begin again, if it could be begun again ; but the relapsers were often so hardened in sin that no impression could be made upon them.

“ ‘What could they do in a case of so extreme necessity, where so many souls lay at stake ?

“ ‘No clergyman would assist at all. The expedient that remained was, to find some one among themselves who was upright of heart, and of sound judgment, in the things of God ; and to desire him to meet the rest as often as he could, in order to confirm them, as he was able, in the ways of God, either by reading to them, or by prayer, or by exhortation.’

“This statement,” adds the biographer, “may be considered as affording the key to all that, with respect to church order, may be called irregularity in Mr. Wesley’s future proceedings. God had given him large fruits of his ministry, in various places. When he was absent from them, the people were as sheep having no shepherd ; or

were rather persecuted by their native pastors, the clergy ; and he was reduced, therefore, to the necessity of leaving them without religious care, or of providing it for them. He wisely chose the latter ; but, true to his own principles, and even prejudices, he carried this no further than the necessity of the case. The hours of service were in no instance to interfere with those of the Establishment, and at the parish church the members were exhorted to communicate. Thus a religious society was raised up within the National Church ; and with this anomaly, that, as to all its interior arrangements, as a society, it was independent of its ecclesiastical authority. The irregularity was, in principle, as great when the first step was taken as at any future time. It was a form of practical and partial separation, though not of theoretical dissent ; but it arose out of a moral necessity, and existed for some years in such a state, that, had the clergy been disposed to co-operate in this evident revival and spread of true religion ; and had the heads of the Church been willing to sanction itinerant labours among its ministers, and private religious meetings among the serious part of the people, for mutual edification, the great body of Methodists might have been retained in strict communion with the Church of England."

Mr. Wesley, at this eventful period of his history, found himself surrounded by circumstances which, in extent, he could scarcely have contemplated ; and for which he possessed not the requisite materials for making what, in his judgment, appeared to be an adequate provision. A new and powerful impetus had been applied to the public mind. Large masses in London, Bristol, Staffordshire, Lancashire, and other densely-populated districts, had been brought under the ministry of the Gospel, awakened to a sense of their guilt and danger, and in every direction were uttering the plaintive wail—"What must we do to be saved?" The crisis was momentous. It was a pivot around which the destinies of futurity whirled in fearful revolution. It was not an occasion that allowed time to be wasted in calculating contingencies,—in adjusting the balances of probability,—in determining questions of ecclesiastical policy,—in discussing the literary and moral components of ministerial qualification. Eternity

rested on a point, and the present and final salvation of multitudes hung on the issue of the moment. Had clerical aid been available, Mr. Wesley would, beyond all question, have brought it to bear on the exigence, and then the idea of employing Lay Agency would, in all probability, never have entered into his mind. But the means to be employed, irregular though they were, had been suggested by the difficulties with which he was surrounded ; and he adopted the best means then at hand, and left the result with God. Let the event decide the wisdom of his choice.

To a reflecting mind, uninfluenced by party prejudice, it is pleasing to trace the small beginnings, the gradual advances, and the crowning success of Methodism during the first half-century of its existence. Few public events in our domestic history have furnished materials more pregnant with varied instruction, or have presented a national episode more fruitful in varied incidents, than the rise of Methodism, viewed in connection with its amazing spread prior to the death of its celebrated founder, John Wesley. And it can scarcely be denied that much of its success is to be ascribed, instrumentally, to the employment of Lay (itinerant and local) Preachers in carrying out the working plans which were gradually and cautiously adopted by that extraordinary man, as measures of expediency rather than of immediate conviction, arising out of exigencies which, as they could not have been contemplated by ordinary foresight, were necessarily placed beyond the reach of ordinary means and provisions.

In the employment of a Local Ministry as one of the administrative elements of its constitution, Methodism stands out in marked distinction from every other branch of Non-conformity. It is not denied that a large amount of Lay Agency is employed by other religious denominations in

carrying out certain parts of their respective systems ; but the agency they employ is rather collateral than direct in its relation to the Local Ministry which forms so important an ingredient in the economy of Methodism.

That Mr. Wesley had imbibed his ultra notions of clerical supremacy and other high-church dogmas, whilst under the fostering care of his *alma mater*, there can be little doubt ; but that he gradually relaxed his hold on human traditions, however venerable by age or sanctioned by authority, in proportion as his capacious and penetrating mind received clearer and more extensive views of the spiritual nature and comprehensive designs of Christianity, is equally evident and convincing. He was no common man. He was endowed with gifts which have been imparted to few of the human race. His intellectual qualities were of the highest order. His grasp of thought was not to be measured by ordinary standards. His acquirements as a scholar were rich, varied, and profound. His knowledge as a theologian was acute, correct, and extensive. As a writer he was vivid, terse, and nervous ; and his style of composition was clear, sententious, and convincing. He usually saw things through an atmosphere of light powerful but diaphanous. Whenever a subject came before him requiring the close exercise of his thinking powers, his keen penetration at once "shut out the side lights and seized upon its strong points." In preaching, his manner was calm, sedate, and dignified. His voice, though not powerful, was clear ; and the solemnity of his manner invariably rivetted attention. He had no puerilities ; no sudden flights of eloquence ; no oratorical display ; no fanciful embellishments. His pulpit discourses were chaste, and sometimes elegant ; but their great charm was their simplicity of diction and earnestness of appeal. In his hands,

abstract truths became living and practical principles, and his great aim through life was

“To teach, convince, correct, reprove,
And build men up in holiest love.”

He was conscious of that within him, which gave vigour to thought and energy to action ; and, though the human mind at that period of our history was thickly veiled by darkness and awfully debased by superstition, he fearlessly and resolutely grappled with the difficulties of the age, and lived, like Luther, the great archetype of Reformers, to see the day-star of a brighter dispensation rise with Divine effulgence above the moral horizon.

Mr. Wesley, on resigning his Fellowship at Oxford for a more important and extensive field of labour, struck out a new path, which enabled him to bring the light and influence of the Gospel to bear with telling effect on the gloom and insensibility which almost universally prevailed. The clergy, at that time, with very few exceptions, had settled on their lees, and many had adopted the sports of the field as a succedaneum for the discharge of ministerial and pastoral duties. The services of the churches were generally cold, formal, and inappropriate to the state and necessities of the population around them. Pulpit harangues, for the most part, consisted of senseless diatribes, dry sentimentalisms, and scraps of ethics from Pagan moralists, interlarded with extracts from the early Fathers. Although occasional scintillations of heavenly light “shot athwart the gloom profound,” yet, as they had to pass through the medium of a speculative and perverted theology, they only appeared and disappeared to make the darkness more palpable than before.

The men whom Mr. Wesley selected as his Itinerant and Local coadjutors during the first years of his arduous and

difficult enterprise, were not taken from the schools of learning and science ; still less were they distinguished by worldly rank or worldly greatness. Though they were unlearned, in the scholastic acceptation of that term, yet were they men of purity, whom no insults could provoke ; of zeal, which no labours could extinguish ; of energy, which no difficulties could repress ; of courage, which no dangers could intimidate ; and of perseverance, which no obstacles could retard or turn aside. They were men who avoided no amount of labour, and shunned no extreme of peril, but who rushed to the onslaught, however pregnant with danger, "not counting their lives dear unto them, so that they might finish their course with joy, and the ministry they had received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God." That man is little to be envied, who can read the lives of such men as John Nelson, and the other burning and shining lights, without catching some portion of the effluent inspiration by which they were actuated in their work of faith and labour of love.*

We are well aware that a correct knowledge of the higher branches of scholastic learning has frequently been paraded forth by a certain class of theoretic divines, as the chief qualification for the efficient discharge of ministerial functions ; and, consequently, that every person not having

* Nothing is more remarkable than the amazing spread and eventual establishment of Christianity in the Apostolic age, especially when we consider the nature and quality of the instrumentality employed. Twelve fishermen of Galilee, without the acquirements of human erudition, the influence of worldly station, the possession of pecuniary resources, or other adventitious aids,—friendless, powerless, penniless,—erected the standard of the Cross in the very heart of Satan's dominions. Hosts of opposition gave way before them ; and all the wealth and wisdom, the pride and prejudice, the power and policy of Jews, Greeks, or Romans, could not resist its triumphal advances.

obtained the usual literary distinctions conferred by the *Senatus Academicus*, is totally ineligible for the office of the sacred ministry. Without wishing to disparage, in the slightest degree, the acquisitions of human science in any of its departments, we have yet to learn where lies the necessary connection between Latin, Greek, mathematics, and Salvation. It may be contended, that the Apostles who were assembled at Jerusalem, in solemn convention, on the memorable day of Pentecost, were miraculously endowed with a correct knowledge of most of the languages and dialects then known; and that the Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and others, who were present during the celebration of that great national festival, heard in their "own tongues the wonderful works of God." But who does not see that the "gift of tongues," on that extraordinary occasion, was imparted, rather as a vernacular medium, through which to convey the ministry of mercy and salvation to such a mixed assembly, than as a mere literary distinction? The most elaborate Essays on ancient ethics, drawn from the classic stores of Greece and Rome, and delivered with all the pomp and parade of studied elocution, would do little towards converting the soul, unless accompanied by Divine influence, in its direct or collateral agency.*

* The first Wesleyan preachers had few of the external aids which are so sedulously cultivated in the present day. They had no Theological Institution in which to study divinity *secundem artem*, and to acquire those artificial refinements which are now deemed essentially necessary to give effect to pulpit ministrations. They were little skilled in dialectical theology; but they were men of prayer, and, therefore, men of power. Their constant employment was to break up the fallow ground, throw in the seed broadcast, and carry on the work, through its successive stages, according to the rules of Apostolic husbandry. No doubt, as a mere abstract question, much might be urged in favour of educational refinement, even in its appli-

What, if it be contended, that the Apostle to the Gentiles was a man of extensive and varied erudition! Did he employ his learning in furtherance of his primary objects as a Gospel Minister, or as an element for the acquirement of either political power, or personal popularity? Quite the reverse. His preaching, he has told us, was "not with wisdom of words," nor "excellency of speech," but "in demonstration of the Spirit." But why did he not display his diversified learning before the literary magnates of Corinth, which had acquired, as its distinctive cognomen, *totius Græciæ lumen*? He has given a powerful and commanding reason, "*that their faith should not stand in the wisdom of man, but in the power of God!*" Every minister of the Gospel, whose simple aim is the exaltation of the Saviour, and the salvation of the sinner, should take the first epistle to the Corinthians as a *vade mecum*, and discharge his pulpit duties in conformity with the Apostle's recommendations and practice.

Eighteen hundred years have passed away since Christianity was introduced by tentmakers and fishermen; and with all the refinements of the age at which we have arrived, that preaching is the most useful which stands less in the words that man's wisdom teacheth, than in the power of the Holy Ghost.

Without instituting comparisons between the Methodist Local Ministry, and the Lay Agency employed by other denominational sections of the Christian Church, the author conceives that he should not expose himself to the charge of presumption, were he to claim for it, as a collective body, a

cation to the Christian ministry; but, looking at it in its practical bearings upon Methodism, there is some ground for the fear that its results on the Connexional prosperity have to be calculated in an inverse ratio.

distinguished place in the just estimation of the Non-conforming portion of the British community. That the members of this large body contribute the greatest amount of motive power to the complicated machine which hebdomadally exerts its mighty energies for the moral welfare of the people of this country, is a fact, which, it is presumed, will scarcely be denied. The author readily admits that many of the Methodist Local Preachers are as little distinguished by social rank, or scholastic erudition, as the herdman of Tekoa ;* yet, like that faithful and uncompromising reprove of the crying iniquities of the masses around him, they every Sabbath-day distribute themselves over the face of the land, and proclaim as they go, "Prepare to meet thy God !" But, if it be admitted, that a large portion of the lay fraternity of the Methodist ministry move within the circle of an undistinguished sphere, the fact must not be concealed, that a considerable number traverse the plane of a higher orbit. Passing over mere social distinctions, the author contends, that the Local Ministry of the Methodist Society "combines in its vital constitution, and generates in its moral influence, 'Glory to God in the highest, on earth peace, good-will towards men.'" Among the fifteen thousand Local Preachers who constitute the Lay branch of the Methodist ministry are found men of superior intellectual stamen ; of highly cultivated talent ; of extensive erudition ; and it may generally be said of the large majority, whose mental capabilities and literary acquirements are measured by a lower standard, that they possess strong natural genius, sound common sense,

* It is said that after Owen had gratified a strong desire to hear Bunyan preach, King Charles II. ridiculed him for going to hear a tinker prate. "Please your Majesty," said Owen, "could I possess that tinker's abilities for preaching, I would most gladly relinquish all my learning."

active zeal, fervent piety, indomitable energy, all directed by a paramount aim to advance the intermediate interests and the crowning felicities of their fellow-men.*

* "Southey," says Cheever, in his "Lectures on the Life and Times of Bunyan," "has observed, apparently by way of excuse for the arrest of Bunyan by the Establishment, that his office of preaching might well be deemed incompatible with his calling. Perhaps the poet and historian had forgotten, or might never have had his attention directed to a passage which he might have found in the Acts of the Apostles, descriptive of the early teachers and preachers of Christianity: 'And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them and wrought; for by their occupation they were tent-makers.' John Bunyan had no more need to be ashamed of his temporal than of his spiritual calling; nor was there any such inconsistency between the two as could form the most distant shadow of justification to a persecuting hierarchy for forbidding him to speak in the name of Christ to the people. Indeed, had the Tinker of Bedford been pursuing his humble occupation when Matthew, Peter, and John were upon earth, his was a character of such native elements, that he might have been chosen as one of their associates in the work of the primitive Gospel ministry. Our Saviour committed the Gospel to unlearned, but not to ignorant, men; and Bunyan, though illiterate, was not ignorant: no man is so who believes with the heart in Him who is the light of the world—beholds spiritual realities, and acts with reference to them."

CHAPTER III.

CLERICAL OPPOSITION TO LAY PREACHING—MR. WESLEY'S LETTER IN DEFENCE TO ARCHDEACON FLUERY—INTRODUCTION OF METHODISM INTO AMERICA—SPIRIT OF THE EARLY PREACHERS—ALTERED STATE OF THINGS—ANECDOTE OF THOMAS AQUINAS—DISCUSSION OF IMPORTANT POINTS AT THE CONFERENCE OF 1763—MR. WESLEY'S TWELVE RULES OF A HELPER.

IN the early part of the year 1748, the question of Lay Preaching was much agitated throughout the country, and various objections were loudly urged against the lawfulness and expediency of admitting laymen to exercise the functions of the ministry. Mr. Wesley was aware of the state of public feeling on the subject, but waited until a fitting opportunity arrived, in which he might fairly grapple with the objection and show its futility and weakness. That opportunity soon presented itself. Whilst Mr. Wesley was on his second tour through Ireland, he was personally addressed by Archdeacon Fluery, to whom he sent the following letter, which, as it was subsequently published, appears to have set the matter at rest :—

“ Tullamore, May 4, 1748.

“ REV. SIR,—I have at present neither leisure nor inclination to enter into a formal controversy ; but you will give me leave just to offer a few loose hints relating to the subject of last night's conversation.

“ I. 1. Seeing life and health are things of so great importance, it is, without question, highly expedient that physicians should have all possible advantages of learning and education.

“ 2. That trial should be made of them by competent judges, before they practise publicly.

“ 3. That, after such trial, they be authorised to practise by those who are empowered to convey that authority.

“ 4. And that, while they are preserving the lives of others, they should have what is sufficient to sustain their own.

"5. But, supposing a gentleman bred at the University of *Dublin*, with all the advantages of education ; after he has undergone all the usual trials, and then been regularly authorised to practise :

"6. Suppose, I say, this physician settles at —, for some years, and yet makes no cures at all ; but, after trying his skill on five hundred persons, cannot show that he has healed one, many of his patients dying under his hands, and the rest remaining just as they were before he came.

"7. Will you condemn a man, who, having some little skill in physic, and a tender compassion for those who are sick or dying all around him, cures many of those, without fee or reward, whom the doctor could not cure ?

"8. At least *did* not (which is the same thing as the case in hand), were it only for this reason, because he did not go to them, and they would not come to him.

"9. Will you condemn him, because he has not learning ? or has not had an University education ? What then ? He cures those whom the man of learning and education cannot cure.

"10. Will you object, that he is no physician, nor has any authority to practise ? I cannot come into your opinion. I think he is a physician who heals—*Medicus est qui non medetur*—and that every man has authority to save the life of a dying man. But if you only mean he has no authority to take fees, I contend not ; for he takes none at all.

"11. Nay, and I am afraid it will hold, on the other hand, *Medicus non est qui non medetur*. I am afraid, if we use propriety of speech, he is no physician who works no cure.

"12. 'Oh ! but he has taken his degree of Doctor of Physic, and therefore has authority.' Authority to do what ? 'Why to heal all the sick that will employ him.' But (to waive the case of those who will not employ him, and would you have even their lives thrown away ?) he does not heal those that do employ him. He that was sick before, is sick still ; or else he is gone hence, and is no more seen. Therefore his authority is not worth a rush ; for it serves not the end for which it was given.

"13. And surely he has no authority to kill them, by hindering another from saving their lives !

"14. If he either attempts or desires to hinder him, if he condemns or dislikes him for it, it is plain to all thinking men, he regards his own fees more than the lives of his patients.

"II. 1. Now to apply. Seeing life everlasting, and holiness, or health of soul, are things of so great importance, it is highly expedient that ministers, being physicians of the soul, should have all the advantages of education and learning.

"2. That full trial should be made of them, in all respects, and that by the most competent judges, before they enter on the public exercise of their office, the saving souls from death.

"3. That after such trial, they be authorised to exercise that office, by those who are empowered to convey that authority. (I believe bishops are empowered to do this, and have been so from the Apostolic age.)

"4. And that those whose souls they save, ought in the meantime to provide them what is needful for the body.

"5. But suppose a gentleman bred at the university of *Dublin*, with all the advantages of education ; after he has undergone the usual trials, and been regularly authorised to save souls from death :

"6. Suppose I say this minister settles at — for some years, and yet saves no souls at all, saves no sinners from their sins ; but after he has preached all this time to five or six hundred persons, cannot show that he has converted one from the error of his ways ; many of his parishioners dying as they lived, and the rest remaining just as they were before he came.

"7. Will you condemn a man who, having compassion on dying souls, and some knowledge of the Gospel of Christ, without any temporal reward, saves many from their sins whom the minister could not save ?

"8. At least *did* not, nor ever was likely to do it, for he did not go to them, and they would not come to him.

"9. Will you condemn such a preacher because he has not learning ? or has not had an University education ? What then ? He saves those sinners from their sins whom the man of learning and education cannot save.

"10. Will you object, 'But he is no minister, nor has any authority to save souls ?' I must beg leave to dissent from you in this. I think he is a true evangelical minister, *diakonos*, servant of Christ and his church, who *atos diakonos*, so ministers as to save souls from death, to reclaim sinners from their sins ; and that every Christian, if he is able to do it, has authority to save a dying soul. But if you only mean he has no authority to take fees, I grant it. He takes none. As he has freely received, so he freely gives.

"11. But to carry the matter a little further. I am afraid it will hold, on the other hand, with regard to the soul as well as to the body, *Medicus non est qui non medetur*. I am afraid reasonable men will be much inclined to think he that saves no souls is no minister of Christ.

"12. Oh ! but he is ordained, and therefore has authority. Authority to do what ? To save all the souls that will put themselves under his care. True ; but (to waive the case of them that will not ; and would you desire that even those should perish ?) he does not, in fact, save them that are under his care. Therefore, what end does his authority serve ? He that was a drunkard, is a drunkard still. The same is true of the Sabbath-breaker, the thief, the common swearer. This is the best of the case ; for many have died in their iniquity, and their blood will God require at the watchman's hand.

"13. For surely he has no authority to murder souls, either by his neglect, by his smooth, if not false, doctrine, or by hindering another from plucking them out of the fire, and bringing them to life everlasting.

"14. If he either attempts or desires to hinder him ; if he condemns or is displeased with him for it, how great reason is there to fear that he regards his own profit more than the salvation of souls !

"I am, Rev. Sir, your affectionate brother,

"JOHN WESLEY."

From the "Minutes of the American Methodist Conference," held in 1786, it appears that, twenty years prior to that time, Methodism had been introduced into New York and Maryland, by two emigrant Local Preachers from Ireland. The information is given in the following words :—

"During the space of thirty years past, *i. e.*, from the year 1756, certain persons, members of the societies, emigrated from England and Ireland, and settled in various parts of this country. About twenty years ago (1766), *Philip Embury*, a local preacher from Ireland, began to preach in the city of New York, and formed the *first society* of his own countrymen and the citizens. About the same time *Robert Strawbridge*, a local preacher from Ireland, settled in Frederic County, in the state of Maryland, and, preaching there, formed some societies. A little after, *Thomas Webb, Esq.*,* at that time a Lieutenant in the 48th Regiment of Foot, preached at New York and Philadelphia with great success. He, with the assistance of his friends, erected a chapel in New York, in the year 1768, which was the first belonging to the Methodist Society in America."

Such were the men who, in the stormy days of our Connexional infancy, stood the brunt of the battle, when heaven and hell were contending for victory ;—a victory which was to decide the momentous question, whether the sinner should be happy or miserable for ever—the slave of Satan, or the freed-man of Christ. The adverse legions mustered all their forces, and laid under contribution all their munitions of war, to crush the infant cause ; which, notwithstanding the determined opposition it had to encounter, gathered strength in every successive conflict. Power, leagued with power,

"Stood forth in phalanx strong ;"

whilst the clashing of arms, the booming of cannon, and the furious yells of the confederate combatants, gave token of the demon-like spirit by which they were actuated.

* Lieutenant Webb resigned his military commission, and became a travelling preacher, and died in the work in 1796. He was usually called Captain Webb.

Never were men more fitted for a great moral enterprise than those who enrolled themselves as watchmen in the early ranks of Methodism. The first preachers, who, in fact, constituted the forlorn hope, were well aware that the breach in the enemy's *escarpe* must be achieved by conflict and struggle. Like the Reformation, Methodism was to grow up amid convulsions and storms ; to triumph over opposition, not by its own energies, but by the irresistible power of Divine Truth. Its champions and chiefs were moved by a principle at once invincible and diffusive ; unfettered by the narrow restrictions of human policy, or unintimidated by the combinations of human power. Infidelity and other forms of irreligion were struggling, not only for ascendancy, but for perpetuity, and were only to be effectually broken down by the application of moral power. The deathless interests of a nation were at stake, and it was necessary to defend and protect them with zeal and enthusiasm. To John Nelson and his indomitable associates, were communicated moral light, and energy, and influence, suited to the difficulty of the enterprise on which they had set out. Having themselves struggled out of the "bondage of corruption into the liberty of the sons of God," they came to the work unshackled by technical prejudices and unwarped by party opinions ; with minds richly imbued with the simple truth as it is in Jesus ; and with lives remodelled by the transforming power of the Holy Ghost. They took their stand on the broad principles of Christianity, and exhibited the Saviour, not as set forth in creeds or human systems, but as living and moving in the spirit of his Word. Like the Baptist, they raised the voice of denunciation against sin, irrespective of the rank of the sinner ; and their thunders fell like death-strokes in every direction. The Gospel, and the Gospel only, was their

standard of faith, of practice, and of appeal. It must be confessed that their work was arduous and difficult. They had to eradicate long-cherished corruptions which had spread their cancerous fangs through the entire moral frame ; to assail and reprobate vices which had been sanctioned by ages and tolerated by universal custom. And all this at the expense of their social reputation, at the hazard of their personal liberty, and sometimes at the peril of their lives. These labours, privations, and sufferings were only to be endured by men who constantly drew their support from God ; and only to be compensated by the delightful results which their ministry yielded to themselves and others.

Time, however, has greatly altered the aspects of things. The numerous and varied innovations which the progress of refinement has introduced, have given an entirely new phase to society,—have generated a morbid feeling and a feverish appetite, which are the melancholy but certain indications of moral deterioration. The preachers, in the early days of our Connexional history, sought the nearest way to men's hearts and consciences ; and, by plain and pointed exhibitions of Divine Truth, generally succeeded in producing conviction. Modern sermons are more adorned, and are strongly tinctured with a soporiferous quality, which, as it opiates the conscience, leaves the heart cold and torpid and unaffected. The fact is, many of the passive elements of life are artificial ; the medium through which objects are seen is deceptive, frequently magnifying what should be minified ; and hence the anomalies which mar and deform the best features of our moral and social economy. In the present day, nothing is more common than for members of our societies and congregations, where any claim or pretension to education is set up, to form their estimate of ministerial qualities by mere

external circumstances, which neither fully nor fairly warrant their conclusions. They listen to the eloquent appeals and splendid imagery of popular divines with astonishment and admiration ; but they coldly repudiate the simple, pious, unassuming local preacher, who, without noise or show, endeavours to fix in the human mind principles which are to decide the eventful destinies of futurity ; and then, in the pleading power of earnest prayer, invokes that influence without which “nothing is wise, or strong, or holy,” to give to those principles a right direction, and lead their exercise to a saving issue.

Primitive Methodism is little known in the present day, except as a matter of historical record. It is true that many of its original forms are retained ; but its substance has been materially altered. The change which it has undergone resembles, in some respects, that which is described by ecclesiastical writers as having taken place in the time of Constantine ; when the church, which for centuries had been struggling with poverty and persecution, suddenly found itself raised to the summit of worldly greatness. Its treasures were drawn from the imperial exchequer, and its name stood identified with everything that was honourable and dignified in human estimation. But, if we may credit the religious historians of former days, the earthly pomp and glory of the church ministered little to its spiritual growth or advantage. Anthony Horneck, a shrewd and pious theologian, has observed, that, before the time of Constantine, the church had wooden chalices and golden priests ; but, afterwards, it had golden chalices and wooden priests.*

* It is related of the celebrated Thomas Aquinas, that on one of his visits to the Pope, he found that dignitary contemplating vast stores of wealth which had recently been poured into the Pontifical treasury. “Holy father,” said the

The Itinerancy of Methodism has retained few of its original features. Both the warp and the woof are greatly changed. The *useful* has, to a considerable extent, been superseded by the *ornamental*,—to keep pace, it is said, with the so-called march of social and intellectual improvement. Between the former and the latter preachers there is this difference: in the former, the preacher was sought by his office; in the latter, the office is sought by the preacher. This, though the rule, has many honourable exceptions. In Mr. Wesley's day a preacher's office was no *sinecure*. He had to preach or expound *every morning and evening*, and frequently four times on the Sabbath-day. He was continuously travelling from place to place. The "round," as it was then called, sometimes extended over several modern circuits. In addition to which, the preachers had to visit the bands, the select societies, and the penitents, and also to direct or superintend all the working machinery at every place where they came.

At the twentieth Conference, held in London in 1763, several important points were discussed which had more immediate reference to the ministers of God's Word. After describing the office and duties of a "Helper," now denominated Superintendent, the "Minutes" of that Conference proceed as follow:—

"Q. How shall we try those who think they are moved by the Holy Ghost and called of God to preach?

"A. Inquire, 1. Do they know God as a pardoning God? Have they the love of God abiding in them? Do they desire and seek nothing but God? And are they holy in all manner of conversation? 2. Have they

Pope to his pious and distinguished visitor, "the church cannot now say, as did our Apostolic founder to the lame man at the beautiful gate of the temple, who solicited alms, 'Silver and gold have I none.'" "No," replied the holy father; "neither can it say, as did that illustrious Apostle, 'In the name of Jesus of Nazareth, rise up and walk!'"

gifts as well as grace for the work? Have they, in some tolerable degree, a clear, sound understanding? Have they a right judgment in the things of God? Have they a just conception of salvation by faith? And has God given them utterance? Do they speak justly, readily, clearly? 3. Have they fruit? Are any truly convinced of sin and converted to God by their preaching? As long as these three marks concur in any one, we believe he is called of God to preach. These we receive as a sufficient proof that he is moved thereto by the Holy Ghost.

"Q. But how shall we know whether they concur or no in any particular person?

"A. 1. If he is near us, we will talk with him on the preceding heads, and then hear him preach. 2. We will desire him to write down or relate his reasons why he thinks he is called of God thereto. 3. We will examine those who seem to have been convinced of sin or converted to God by his preaching. 4. If he is at a distance, we will desire the assistant (helper) to do this, and to inquire what is the judgment of the society in that place concerning him."

The following are the "Twelve Rules of a Helper," which were then agreed upon:—

"1. Be diligent. Never be unemployed a moment. Never be triflingly employed. Never while away time; neither spend any more time at any place than is strictly necessary. 2. Be serious. Let your motto be, Holiness to the Lord. Avoid all lightness, jesting, and foolish talking. 3. Converse sparingly and cautiously with women, particularly with young women. 4. Take no step towards marriage without first consulting with your brethren. 5. Believe evil of no one; unless you see it done, take heed how you credit it. Put the best construction upon everything; you know the judge is always supposed to be on the prisoner's side. 6. Speak evil of no one, else your word especially would eat as doth a canker. Keep your thoughts within your own breast till you come to the person concerned. 7. Tell every one what you think wrong in him, and that plainly, as may be, else it will fester in your heart. Make all haste to cast the fire out of your bosom. 8. Do not affect the gentleman. You have no more to do with this character than with that of a dancing-master. A preacher of the Gospel is the servant of all. 9. Be ashamed of nothing but sin; not of fetching wood (if time permit) or drawing water; not of cleaning your own shoes or your neighbour's. 10. Be punctual. Do everything exactly at the time; and, in general, do not *mend* our rules, but keep them; not for wrath, but for conscience' sake. 11. You have nothing to do but to save souls; therefore spend and be spent in this work; and go always not only to those who want you, but to those that want you most.

Observe, it is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society ; but to save as many souls as you can ; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and, with all your power, to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord. And remember, a Methodist preacher is to mind every point, great and small, in the Methodist discipline ; therefore, you will need all the sense you have, and to have all your wits about you. 12. Act in all things, not according to your own will, but as a son in the Gospel. As such, it is your part to employ your time in the manner which we direct : partly in preaching and visiting from house to house ; partly in reading, meditation, and prayer. Above all, if you labour with us in the Lord's vineyard, it is needful that you should do that *part* of the work which we advise, at those times and places which we judge most for his glory."

At this time all the Travelling Preachers were called *Helpers* ; i. e., helpers of Mr. Wesley ; some as *Assistants* in every part of his office, and others as *Preachers* ; and he considered them, with himself, as extraordinary messengers, designed by the Lord to provoke others to jealousy. He considered them as *extraordinary*, because, in general, they were not educated for the office, but were mostly young men intended for trade. They had no thought of preaching till they knew the Lord ; but their labours were powerfully owned of God in the conversion of souls.

CHAPTER IV.

MORAL GOVERNMENT OF GOD—ADAPTATION OF TALENT IN THE LOCAL MINISTRY TO ITS VARIED REQUIREMENTS—ANECDOTE OF FLORID PREACHING : ROBERT HALL'S OPINION OF IT—MISTAKES OF YOUNG PREACHERS—AFFECTING DREAM—THE AUTHOR'S EARLY MISTAKES AS A LOCAL PREACHER—LETTER BY DR. CLARKE TO THE AUTHOR ON PREACHING—THE LOCAL PREACHERS UNALTERED IN PRIMITIVE CHARACTER—HOW REGARDED IN SOCIAL LIFE—THEIR LABOURS AND LIABILITIES—BUNYAN AND THE BISHOP OF PETERBOROUGH—THE SPREAD OF METHODISM.

IN the moral government of God, we distinctly trace, through all the variety of its arrangements and operations, the clear and unmistakeable evidences of Divine intelligence. Every act of that government forms a separate item in one great unity of design, all tending to a common point of convergence ; namely, the full and final salvation of man.

It is true, that the Almighty is an infinite being,—that his powers and perfections, his plans and operations, his ends and his means, are absolutely without limits, and, therefore, incomprehensible by man. But, still, we may form some general ideas of the nature and properties of his attributes ; and, by analogy, may draw inferences from those ideas, as justly as from others which we are accustomed to form on subjects within the ordinary grasp of our apprehension.

We cannot trace the Almighty's benevolence, mercy, justice, and other moral attributes, throughout the wide field of their extensive operations ; but we know sufficient of these attributes to enable us to form a tolerably correct judgment of what agrees with, or what is opposed to, them. The moral attributes of the Almighty, though they are infi-

nite, do not essentially differ from the same attributes in man, the difference being not of essence, but of degree.

“God nothing does, or suffers to be done,
But thou would'st do thyself, could'st thou but see
The end of all events, as well as He.”

Now, in forming our judgment upon those acts of our fellow-men which from time to time fall under our observation, we notice how they are exercised, what are their obvious bearings, and thence draw our conclusions with reference to the motives by which they are superinduced ; and, although we cannot bring under the ken of our inspection the motives by which the Almighty is actuated in the various parts of his procedure towards man, yet, without presumption, we may occasionally draw inferences from the outbeamings of his mercy, or the outpourings of his wrath, which leave us in little perplexity or doubt as to the springs from whence they issue. “It is a law of our nature,” says a popular writer, “to argue from the effect to the cause,—from the action to the agent,—from the ends proposed, and the means of pursuing them, to the character and disposition of the being in whom we observe them. By these processes we learn the invisible mind and character of man ; and by the same processes we ascend to the mind of God, whose works, effects, operations, and ends, are as expressive and significant as the best and most decisive actions of men.” All the acts of God's moral government, whether they relate to providence or grace, bear such internal, as well as external, marks of their Divine originality, as to render their objects and aims perfectly coincident with our highest conceptions of God.

In full accordance with the principle of this reasoning, it may be fairly assumed, that the appointment by the Saviour of a standing Ministry was one branch of this unity of design. It is not necessary to debate the question, whether other

means might, or might not, have been appointed to accomplish the objects of the Christian Ministry. The author's deliberate conviction is, that the provisions in the economy of Redemption are, in their general and particular adaptations, the best, both in design and application, that could have been appointed.

It will scarcely be denied by those persons who have any considerable acquaintance with the character and working of the Methodist Local Ministry, that it possesses adaptations for the particular sphere within which it is exercised exactly fitted for the duties which its fulfilment requires. The social position of Local Preachers gives them many advantages with the working population, which can scarcely be overestimated. It must be obvious to every one who understands the common-place relations between cause and effect, that, for preachers of the Gospel to render their ministrations useful to the labouring classes, they should avail themselves of the idioms of speech and the general modes of life which prevail in their respective localities, as channels through which to gain access to the understanding, and thence to the heart. This is an acquirement which cannot be obtained in the schools. It is that kind of knowledge which, in many circumstances, gives the artisan an advantage over the philosopher. As language is the ordinary medium of communication between man and man, it is essential to mutual understanding that the terms employed should be such as are intelligible to, and comprehended by, both parties ; otherwise the objects of intercourse would necessarily be defeated. A lecture on chemistry, or any other branch of physical science, if encumbered with technicalities, would be utterly unintelligible to an illiterate assembly. So a preacher of the Gospel, however distinguished by the originality and brilliance of

his conceptions ; the power and persuasion of his logical skill ; the loftiness and beauty of his language ; the eloquence of his style ; the splendour of his imagery, or any other oratorical decorations ; if he were to clothe his sermons with the mere frippery of rhetorical trappings, they would be utterly lost upon a congregation whose scholastic attainments were confined to the simple rudiments of education, and whose knowledge of modes of speech extended little beyond the dissyllabic elements of the English language.* It requires little refinement of learning to show, or little depth of penetration to discover, that pulpit discourses, to benefit the uneducated masses, especially in the rural districts, must be adapted, in their constructive composition, style, and diction, to the mental capabilities and literary acquirements of those to whom they are addressed. The adaptation of means to the end, is the secret and mainspring of success in all the departments of life ; and the adverse results of human enterprise, whatever be the specific character of the object sought, may generally be traced either to a want of correspondence between the means and the end, or to some capital defect in the mode by which those means are applied.

* Some years ago, one of our young local preachers, who indulged rather freely in rhetorical flourishes, had to address a congregation of colliers, in one of the mining districts of North Staffordshire. After soaring for some time in the regions of imagination, and scattering around him flowers of elocution with much self-complacence, a collier, whose educational acquirements were not of a cognate order, fixed his swart glare on the youthful Demosthenes, and having caught his eye, exclaimed, in a manner which sufficiently betokened his disgust and mortification :—"Eh ! which a bit o' stuff it is."

It is related of the celebrated Robert Hall, that having once heard a popular preacher, who embellished his discourses with the richest garniture which he could cull from the fields of imagery, was asked on leaving the chapel, what he thought of the sermon, when, with his usual quaintness, he replied—"Why to be sure it was very pretty, but you know a man cannot feed on flowers."

It not unfrequently occurs that the young men who enter the Local Ministry,—if they happen to possess an elastic mind, a vivid imagination, an ardent temperament, and have acquired a moderate degree of elementary education,—take a wrong direction at the outset of their professional life, and never afterwards recover their lost advantages. Not having the benefit of well-digested and well-applied counsel during the important stages of their initiatory course, they usually follow the suggestions of their own untutored minds, and adopt plans which enfeeble the faculties of thought, and place the mental economy under the pressure of mechanical restrictions, at once destructive of its liberty and power. An overwhelming sense of their responsible functions, as set forth in the Gospel commission (Ezek. xxxiii., 7, *et seq.*), associated with an idea of unfitness for their efficient and saving discharge, leads them to imagine that the subjects brought before their congregations, to be effective, must be arranged with special regard to order and perspicuity; and that the phraseology must be in accordance with the weight and dignity of the subjects which it is employed to communicate to the people; and, therefore, they write out their sermons *verbatim*, commit them to memory, and recite them, time after time, to every class of congregation, literate or illiterate, without the slightest verbal alteration. It is easy to understand, that, although such a plan may develop the resources of the preacher's ingenuity, and secure for him the meed of popular applause,* yet, as it diverts the natural current of thought from its legitimate channels, and places

* The following remarkable dream appeared some years ago in the columns of the *Imperial Magazine*, a monthly periodical edited by the late metaphysical Samuel Drew, and enriched with many articles of a first-rate literary character :—"A Gospel minister of evangelical principles, whose name from the circumstances that occurred it will be necessary to conceal,

an incubus on the mind which paralyses its native energies, it is, at best, but a poor compensation for the melancholy wreck of what constitutes the highest natural dignity of man.

The author speaks feelingly on this subject. At the time he received his appointment to a place on the local preachers' plan, in 1817, he was the subject of considerable nervous irritability. Though not by any means constitutionally timid, yet the ministerial office appeared to him to be armed with such solemn sanctions, to involve such terrible responsibilities, and to require such versatility of talent for the

being much fatigued at the conclusion of the afternoon service, retired to his apartment, in order to take a little repose. He had not long reclined upon his couch before he fell asleep, and dreamed, that, on walking into his garden, he entered an arbour, where he sat down, and began to meditate. Whilst thus employed, he thought that he heard some person enter the garden, and, leaving the arbour, he hastened to the spot whence the sound seemed to come, in order to discover who it was that had entered. He had not proceeded far before he saw coming towards him a particular friend of his, a Gospel minister, of considerable talents, and who had rendered himself extremely popular by his zealous and unwearied exertions in the cause of Christ. On approaching his friend, he was surprised to observe that his countenance was covered with a gloom which it had not been accustomed to wear, and that it strongly indicated a violent agitation of mind, apparently arising from conscious remorse. After the usual salutations had passed, his friend asked the relater the time of day, and was told twenty-five minutes past four. On hearing it, the visitor said, "It is just one hour since I died, and now I am damned!" "Damned for what?" inquired the dreaming minister. "It is not," said he, "because I have not preached the Gospel; neither is it because I have not been rendered useful; for I have now many seals to my ministry, that can bear testimony to the truth as it is in Jesus, as they had received it from my lips: but it is because *I have been accumulating to myself the applause of men, more than the honour which cometh from above, and verily I have my reward!*" Having uttered these words, he hastily disappeared. The minister awaking shortly afterwards, with the contents of the dream deeply engraven on his memory, and overwhelmed with serious reflections, proceeded to the chapel to conduct the evening service. On his way he was accosted by a friend, who inquired whether he had heard of the severe loss which the church had sustained in the death of that able minister ———. He replied, "No." But being much affected by this singular intelligence, he inquired the time when his departure took place; to which his friend replied, "This afternoon, at twenty-five minutes past three o'clock."

discharge of its sacred duties, that, in a short time after he had made his inaugural attempt, he requested permission to retire from the important field of labour which, he had some reason to fear, he had entered without due deliberation. The superintendent, to whom he preferred his request, gave him great encouragement to maintain his ground ; placed in his hands Claude's Essay on the Composition of a Sermon, Hannam's Skeletons, and other pulpit aids ; and kindly promised to render him any personal assistance within his power. Under these circumstances, the author was induced to revoke his decision and renew his feeble attempts. Contrary, however, to his inwrought convictions, he adopted, by degrees, the memoriter plan ; and though it relieved him from much embarrassment in his public services, yet he derived little satisfaction from its adoption, and still less from its continuance. On calm consideration, he conceived that it contravened the principles and purposes of the Gospel ministry ; first, by restricting the free exercise of the powers of the mind ; secondly, by checking the operations and resisting the influences of the Holy Spirit ; and, thirdly, by closing the ears of a preacher against the sudden calls of duty, whatever the emergence, unless supplied with a sermon, prepared according to the "specific rules of the art." Feeling these convictions gathering thickly around him, and being about to remove to a scene of labour requiring him to preach two or three times a week to the same congregation, he wrote to Dr. Adam Clarke on the subject, and received from the doctor the following reply :—

" Pinner, Middlesex, July 7, 1827.

" DEAR SIR,—In general reference to the subject of your letter, I may say that the Christian ministry, from its nature, must be so frequently and variously exercised as to render it impracticable to write, commit to memory, and recite all the public discourses which its fulfilment requires. This case

is so clear, that I think controversy would be lost on it. What I think has spoiled many of our promising young men, is the reading of the sermons of others in reference to copying the manner and imitating the phraseology of those erudite preachers ; they have, in consequence, become slaves to a certain method not at all congenial to the operations of their own minds ; and, having once missed the current in their minds, which, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, would have led them on to that degree of perfection attainable in their case, they have ever after been 'bound in shallows and in miseries.' Your present mode, leaving every other thing out of the question, must be to you an incessant drudgery ; and I think the sooner you break off from it, the better it will be both for yourself and them who hear you. I dare not say, nor would reason or fact bear me out, that written or recited sermons do no good : great and impressive truths may be thus conveyed to the public ear ; and, therefore, I cannot say give up. But I am perfectly satisfied, that he who can compose a sermon, get it by heart, and recite it in public in an agreeable, solemn, and impressive manner, is capable of a greater work,—the work where feeling, judgment, and reason are constantly in exercise, which they all are in proper extempore preaching. In the recital of previously composed sermons these can have little operation ; and, consequently, much must be wanting to constitute the living Christian ministry. The very circumstance that you mention is an irresistible argument against the mode,—a sudden, unexpected call to go and preach Jesus to souls perishing for lack of knowledge, and to believers who need to be strengthened and built up in their most holy faith. See that your heart be full of God ; and then a person of your good sense will soon feel that your mouth will not lack an abundance of appropriate words. As to 'egregious blunders,' or 'gross errors,' to which you imagine you would be infallibly liable were you to change your plan, I must say I do not believe one word of this. You may be a little embarrassed for a few times at first ; but your good sense will prevent the former, and your piety and thorough knowledge of the Gospel will prevent the latter. The subject that a man understands he can reason on ; and that on which he can reason he can discourse. Take up your subject ; understand it thoroughly : then go to the people with it ; recommend it to their notice ; press it upon their attention ; and reason on its utility and absolute necessity. Do in preaching as you have often done when maintaining a point in social discourse ; and, to follow the fable, if your waggon appears to stick in the mud, whip your horses, and set your shoulder to the wheel, and then call upon Hercules and he will help you.—I am, dear sir, yours, truly,

"A. CLARKE.

"To Mr. Mills, Stafford."

The Methodist Local Ministry has, throughout the successive revolutions which have marked the general history of Methodism, maintained its integral character intact. No change has taken place in its internal constitution since the

day that Mr. Wesley framed its first code of laws. Its collective talent has kept pace with the advancing spirit of the age ; and the piety of its individual members has sustained no perceptible deterioration. A large portion of the Local Preachers, being also class-leaders, unite the ministerial with the pastoral functions, and thus devote their time, and employ their energies, in order to promote the spiritual interests of their fellow-men in time and in eternity. The upper and lower branches of the Wesleyan Ministry are somewhat similar in their working relations to those which are found to exist between iron manufactured into implements used in the various departments of agriculture and into those articles of the same material which have received the higher polish of the artisan. The Local Preachers, who have allowed no intromissions to weaken the safeguards of the Methodist constitution, may fitly be termed the *staple* of the ministry ; whilst the Itinerant Preachers, who have passed through innumerable transmutations, may not inaptly be designated its decorative branch.

The Local Ministry of the Methodist Society offers few inducements for those individuals to enter within its official precincts who are influenced by motives of worldly policy. Although, happily, the day is gone by when to assail a "Swaddler," as the early Methodist preachers were derisively called, with rotten eggs and other offensive missiles, and afterwards to drag them through horse ponds, was the highway to obtain the premium of magisterial and clerical favour, yet the offence of the Cross has by no means ceased. A local preacher, in this day of religious enlightenment and liberality, whatever may be his intellectual capabilities or literary acquirements, occupies an invidious position in the general estimation of the world. His office closes against

him the door to every civil appointment within the extensive range of Church influence or State patronage. He has little intercourse with the world beyond the limits of his own communion. The term Local Preacher is adopted in many circles as a general synonyme for all that is undignified and contemptible as applied to man : and although these unpretending members of the community provoke no political controversies ; meddle with no state affairs ; foment no party broils or animosities ; offer no resistance to constituted authorities ; attempt no innovations upon established institutions ; interpose no opposition to the national executive, in any of its branches, but quietly and unassumingly pursue the even tenor of their way ;—yet little doubt may be entertained, that, were it not for the protection of British law, the outrage and violence with which these humble heralds of salvation were assailed in the infancy of Methodism, would be re-enacted with as much vigour and as little compunction as in the middle of the last century.

But, in addition to the contumely and reproach which Local Preachers have to endure, in the prosecution of their arduous and difficult toil, their office creates trials and imposes labours which can only be sustained and performed by men who are aided by Divine power and actuated by Divine influence. Their continuous mental studies have a wasting effect on the physical frame. Solomon observes, that much study is a weariness to the flesh ; but weariness is not all—it saps the foundation of bodily energy and brings on premature old age. It has been ascertained, by reference to the statistics of mortality, that those men who have been most distinguished for intellectual acumen and metaphysical power, have seldom attained the full age assigned to human life. Besides, the office of a Local

Preacher imposes duties of another kind which contribute to accelerate bodily decay. Among these may be mentioned Sabbath journeyings, generally on foot, and often many miles from their residence,* with frequent exposure to the alternations and extremes of atmospheric temperature. Sometimes on leaving a cottage, where he has been holding forth the Word of Life, and where the heat has stood at from seventy to eighty degrees, the preacher has had to rush suddenly upon the death chills which lie below Zero. Although the effect of these sudden transitions is not always immediately felt, yet they insidiously sever the cords of life.

With such ample stores of pulpit *materiel*, the wonder is not that Methodism should have acquired a position of commanding importance among the various sections of the Anglican Church ; but, considering its age and standing in

* John Bunyan, when pastor of the Baptist Church at Bedford, was in the habit of preaching in the surrounding villages, and frequently walking many miles within the week for that purpose. In his itinerant excursions he was often met by the Bishop of Peterborough, riding in his carriage. The bishop's coachman, who was a Dissenter, and sometimes heard Bunyan preach, had made such representations of his wonderful talents as excited his lordship's curiosity ; he consequently ordered the man, the next time he met Mr. Bunyan, to let him know. The coachman, in a short time, met him on the high road ; and, as he was desired, stopped the carriage, intimated to his master that that was Mr. Bunyan, and to Mr. Bunyan that his lordship wished to speak to him. The bishop, from his carriage-window, thus addressed the Nonconformist : " Mr. Bunyan, I understand you are very clever in interpreting difficult passages of Scripture. What do you think is the meaning of St. Paul, when he says to Timothy, ' The cloak that I left at Troas with Carpus, when thou comest, bring with thee, and the books, but especially the parchments ? ' " " Why, my lord," said Bunyan, " the passage is simple enough : Paul was a travelling preacher, and Timothy was a primitive bishop. In those days it was customary for bishops to wait on travelling preachers : Paul, therefore, instructs Timothy to look after his baggage, and to bring it with him when he came. Times are altered since then : now bishops ride, and travelling preachers walk." The bishop threw himself back in the carriage, cried " Humph ! " and ordered the coachman to drive on.

the religious world, its numerical strength, its collective piety, its external and internal resources, its adaptation and powerful facilities, that its results should not have been more largely commensurate with its means. But there are moral as well as astronomical cycles ; and although the observation of a distinguished writer has less to do with the nascent principles of operative Christianity than with their fitful use and application by man, yet we cannot but see and feel some admonitory force in that observation ; namely, "that all great revivals of religion, proceed, after a time, in an inverse ratio, and descend by a graduated scale from the higher to the lower degrees of temperature." Admitting this to be true in an abstract sense, still it affords no proof that religion may not gradually exert its influence over the springs and motives of human action, control the will, regulate the passions, and give an upward tendency to the exercise of spiritual affections, without any considerable degree of external manifestation ; and, therefore, if the present accession to the ranks of Methodism be not so great as in the day when its varied administrations were more novel, and, consequently, more in accordance with popular views and feelings, it would be both ungenerous and unjust to infer its internal stability and growth from the mere occurrence of accidental circumstances. Whilst, therefore, it still remains an object of deep and undiminished interest with the general ministry to gain converts to Methodism, another object of equal solicitude is to build up and mature those who, through its instrumentality, are brought "from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God."

CHAPTER V.

METHODISM ESTABLISHED BY LAY PREACHING — ORDINATION INTRODUCED INTO THE METHODIST SOCIETY—NUMERICAL STATISTICS IN 1767—DITTO IN 1790—MR. WESLEY'S LETTER ON AMERICAN METHODISM—EPISCOPAL FORM OF CHURCH GOVERNMENT ADOPTED IN AMERICA—REMARKS ON EARLY METHODIST PREACHING—OBSERVATIONS ON EXTEMPORANEOUS PREACHING—DITTO ON MEMORITER SERMONS—DR. CLARKE'S PLAN OF PREACHING—BISHOP BURNET'S AND OTHER OPINIONS ON PREACHING.

THAT the introduction and establishment of Methodism was, under the blessing of God, mainly owing to the instrumentality of Lay Preaching, is a fact that stands out in full relief in all our early Connexional records. Up to the year 1787, (only four years before Mr. Wesley's death,) the English Travelling Preachers were unordained, and were, therefore, in every sense of the word, Lay Preachers. In that year the Presbyterian form of ordination was introduced into English Methodism ; and Messrs. Alexander Mather, Thomas Rankin, and Henry Moore, were the first Methodist preachers, exercising their functions in England, who received that rite. The Rev. John Wesley, the Rev. J. Creighton, and the Rev. Peard Dickenson, Presbyters of the Church of England, were the ordaining ministers.

The first Conference, which was held in London in June, 1744, was composed of Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, four clergymen, and four lay preachers. At that time the Methodist body was confined within narrow limits, its strongholds being London and Bristol. In August of that

year, Mr. Wesley preached his last sermon before the University of Oxford, prior to his formal resignation of his Fellowship. Though he still held communion with the Church of England, and had the assistance of several pious clergymen in carrying out his objects and plans of usefulness, yet, the churches being generally closed against him, his excision as a minister was virtually proclaimed from every pulpit in the kingdom.

The points debated at the first Conference, though few, were extremely important. The outline of a great plan was drawn; and the two main doctrinal pillars on which the structure of Christianity rests, namely, justification and sanctification, were carefully considered in their relations, bearings, operations, and results; the doctrines of imputed righteousness and of Christian perfection were respectively examined, and their lines defined, as to their practical application. This was the day of small things in Methodism; but the little cloud which then showed its opening indications of promise on the distant horizon, gradually rose and extended itself over the entire face of the land.

At the twenty-fourth Conference, held in London in 1767, the number of circuits, of preachers, and of members, was published for the first time, when the following tabular statement was placed on the "Minutes":—

	Circuits.		Preachers.		Members.
In England	25	.....	75	.....	22,410
— Ireland	9	.....	19	.....	2,801
— Scotland	5	.....	7	.....	468
— Wales	1	.....	3	.....	232
	<hr/> 40		<hr/> 104		<hr/> 25,911

At the Conference of 1790, the year before Mr. Wesley died, and twenty-three years after the first publication, the statement was as follows:—

	Circuits.	Preachers.	Members.
In England	69	195	52,832
— Ireland	29	67	14,106
— Wales	3	7	566
— Scotland	8	18	1,086
— Isle of Man	1	3	2,580
— Norman Isles	2	4	498
— West Indies.....	7	13	4,500
— Canada.....	4	6	800
— United States	97	198	43,256
	<hr/> 220	<hr/> 511	<hr/> 120,224

Being an average annual increase of upwards of four thousand members.

Although at the above Conference the members belonging to the American Societies are incorporated with those under British superintendence, yet it appears that they had become an independent church in the year 1784. This was a new epoch in the History of Methodism, and is explained in the following letter from Mr. Wesley to the elders of the American branch of the Methodist Church :—

“ Bristol, September 10, 1784.

“ *To Dr. Coke, Mr. Asbury, and our Brethren in North America.*

“ 1. By a very uncommon train of providences, many of the provinces of *North America* are totally disjoined from the mother country, and erected into independent states. The English Government has no authority over them, either civil or ecclesiastical, any more than over the states of *Holland*. A civil authority is exercised over them, partly by the Congress, partly by the Provincial Assemblies ; but no one either exercises or claims any ecclesiastical authority at all. In this peculiar situation, some thousands of the inhabitants of these states desire my advice ; and, in compliance with their desire, I have drawn up a little sketch.

“ 2. Lord King’s account of the Primitive Church convinced me many years ago, that bishops and presbyters are the same order, and consequently have the same right to ordain. For many years I have been importuned, from time to time, to exercise this right, by ordaining part of our travelling preachers ; but I have still refused, not only for peace’s sake, but because I was determined as little as possible to violate the established order of the National Church to which I belonged.

“ 3. But the case is widely different between England and North America. Here there are bishops who have a legal jurisdiction. In America there are none ; neither any parish ministers. So that, for some hundred miles together, there is none either to baptise or to administer the

Lord's Supper. Here, therefore, my scruples are at an end ; and I conceive myself at full liberty, as I violate no order, and invade no man's right, by appointing and sending labourers into the harvest.

" 4. I have accordingly appointed Dr. Coke and Mr. Francis Asbury to be joint *superintendents* over our brethren in North America ; as also Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey to act as *elders* among them, by baptising and administering the Lord's Supper ; and I have prepared a liturgy little differing from that of the Church of England (I think the best constituted national church in the world), which I advise all the travelling preachers to use on the Lord's-day, in all the congregations, reading the Litany only on Wednesdays and Fridays, and praying extempore on all other days. I also advise the elders to administer the Supper of the Lord on every Lord's-day.

" 5. If any one will point out a more rational and Scriptural way of feeding and guiding those poor sheep in the wilderness, I will gladly embrace it. At present I cannot see any better method than that I have taken.

" 6. It has, indeed, been proposed, to desire the English bishops to ordain part of our preachers for America. But to this I object. 1. I desired the Bishop of London to ordain only one, but could not prevail. 2. If they consented, we know the slowness of their proceedings ; but the matter admits of no delay. 3. If they would ordain them *now*, they would likewise expect to govern them. And how grievously would this entangle us ? 4. As our American brethren are now totally disentangled, both from the State and from the English hierarchy, we dare not entangle them again, either with the one or the other. They are now at full liberty, simply to follow the Scriptures and the Primitive Church ; and we judge it best that they should stand fast in that liberty wherewith God hath so strangely made them free.

" JOHN WESLEY."

At the American Conference, held at Baltimore, in the January following the receipt of this letter, the following note was published in their " Minutes :"—

" Therefore, at this Conference we formed ourselves into an independent church ; and, following the counsel of Mr. John Wesley, who recommended the episcopal mode of church government, we thought it best to become an episcopal church, making the episcopal office elective, and the elected superintendent, or bishop, amenable to the body of ministers and preachers."

It also adds :—

" As the translators of our version of the Bible have used the English word *bishop*, instead of *superintendent*, it has been thought by us that it would appear more Scriptural to adopt the term *bishop*."

The pulpit discourses of the travelling and local preachers, who led the van during the headship of our venerable

Founder, were not generally distinguished by a parade of human learning, and were, therefore, more intelligible to the large crowds who attended the Methodist ministry of that day. The style of the early preachers was simple and unadorned, and not always to be measured by the strict rules of grammatical construction. Their endowments were natural endowments—and their eloquence, the eloquence of the heart. Their sermons were not lectures on elocution, but truth in simple guise; not intended to charm the ear, but to affect the heart; not arrayed in the decorations of studied phraseology, but delivered in words of fire;—the glowing expressions of minds deeply imbued with the spirit, and deeply impressed with the importance, of their work; moved by love and tenderness for sinners, and intently solicitous to awaken conviction and to bring the conscience and heart under the direct influence and operation of the grace of God. They had learnt that the Gospel is a mighty engine, but especially mighty when its energies are influenced by the Spirit of God. They were, for the most part, men well calculated to meet the physical and moral exigences of the times in which they lived. Rocked by billows, and cradled in storms, they knew how to administer sympathy to those who were called to struggle on through life's disciplinary training. They knew

“that woes
And weals together blent, make up the sum
Of life.”

They placed no sacrifice on the temple altar without invoking fire from heaven to descend on it, in token of its acceptance. Indeed, in all the more essential points of the ministerial character,—in public zeal and intrepidity, in private faith and practice,—they stand forth as models for the

imitation of their successors. That they were more abundant in labours than those who have succeeded them, may be inferred from the following restrictive rule, which was passed at the Bristol Conference in 1790 (the last Conference which was attended by Mr. Wesley): "No preacher shall preach oftener than twice on a week-day, or oftener than three times on the Lord's-day." A rule which, for many years, has been like some of the obsolete laws on the statute-book of England,—a perfect nullity.

Much of the success of the early Methodist preachers lay in the Scriptural character and practical application of their ministry. Their preaching was strictly extemporaneous. They had little mechanical skill in pulpit arrangement: even had they possessed it in a large degree, the frequency of their labours would have rendered its cultivation utterly impossible. Sin and salvation formed the burden of their ministry. In addition to the Bible, they studied the book of nature, the book of providence, and the book of grace, in their several relations to, and coincidence with, each other: nor did they neglect the study of the human character in its ever-varying phases. The passing incidents of life which fell under their observation, were, as far as practically useful, made to tell either in the way of instruction or admonition; and their sermons were seldom without effect;—not the startling effect that is sometimes produced by an extraordinary outburst of pulpit eloquence, which, like the explosion of the sky rocket, delights you with its shower of variously-tinted stars which vanish to make the darkness greater. The effects to which their ministry gave birth were like that produced by the opening light of day, diffusing joy and gladness all around.

Mr. Wesley, as though looking forward with the glance of

prophetic destiny, and contemplating the changes which time would introduce, writes :

“ Where shall I wander now to find
The successors they left behind ?
The faithful, whom I seek in vain,
Are minished from the sons of men.”

On the subject of extemporaneous preaching, which still forms one of the distinguishing features of the Methodist ministry, it may be proper to offer a remark ; because, in the present day, it has lost some of the constituent elements which formed its essential character and invested it with its effective importance, in the palmy days of our Connexional piety and power. In extemporaneous preaching, as at present practised, one of two extremes is too commonly adopted by local preachers ; namely, either to make no preparation at all for the pulpit, but place a passive dependence on the aid that may be imparted by the Holy Spirit whilst engaged in the act of preaching ; or, the adopting of such previous arrangements as effectually prevent all mental expansion, and close every avenue against the free operation of the Spirit. Both modes are open to serious objections : the one practically repudiating everything that is mechanical in connection with the discharge of ministerial duties,—which is the offspring of enthusiasm ; the other virtually investing human agency, in pulpit ministrations, with Divine power,—which is an offshoot of Pelagianism.

It would be extremely difficult to lay down a rule on the subject, which would have the effect of reducing all pulpit preparations to one uniform standard. The mind of man is variously constructed, possessing all the versatility of intellectual inflection which lie between the most distant extremes. But, although it would be next to impossible to frame a rule which would meet every conceivable case, yet

such general rules may be laid down as may, at least to some extent and with some modification, be rendered applicable to the present Local Ministry of Methodism.

In all sermons of a strictly extemporaneous character, there is much danger of becoming too colloquial, and, consequently, of detracting from the proper dignity of the ministerial office, especially where the mind is not furnished with a faculty of analytical dissection. Unless an extemporaneous preacher be extraordinarily gifted, his resources must necessarily soon become exhausted, simply because the supplies will not meet the growing demands of his office. Repetition and tautology, the inevitable concomitants of barrenness of thought, would render his sermons *vox præterea nihil*; and, instead of the powerful and awakening exhibitions of Divine Truth, so essential to the success of ministerial effort, the feebleness of his conceptions, and the poverty of his illustrations, would render his sermons powerless and vain. Even fluency of utterance will not be accepted by sensible persons as a substitute for solidity of thought. Due preparation for the pulpit, by reading, meditation, and prayer, is absolutely necessary to a proper discharge of ministerial duties; and the man who presents himself before a congregation of intelligent persons, without having first prepared a digest of his subject, according to the best of his ability, offers an insult to the understanding of his hearers, and a sacrifice to God that costs him nothing. When a preacher enters the pulpit, he gives a virtual pledge to his hearers, that he will increase their amount of information on Gospel verities; and, at the same time, supply them with motives to give to that information practical effect. The redemption of that pledge can only be secured by keeping his knowledge in advance of his congregation.

There can be little doubt that the sermons preached by the Apostles were strictly extemporaneous, and, in every popular sense of the word, unpremeditated. Their difficulties were frequently such as could not have been brought within the ordinary range of human foresight, and, therefore, could not have been met by any previous mode of arrangement. It was evidently to meet the special circumstances to which their ministry applied, that plenary instruction and aid was promised and vouchsafed. But though their ministry had in it much of speciality, both in its difficulties, and also in the means by which those difficulties were to be met, yet no precedent can be drawn from miraculous influence, superinduced for the surmounting of natural disadvantages in an extraordinary work. Much, very much, may be said in favour of extemporaneous preaching, where men possess a proper adaptation of talent for its effective discharge. There can be no doubt that communications from heart to heart are more direct, and kindred sympathies are more likely to act on each other, when conveyed through the natural channels of the human heart, than when communicated through the more cold and formal medium of a written sermon. The look, attitude, mode, animation, and manner of address of an extemporaneous preacher, are far more calculated to generate conviction, than the more systematic mode of a pulpit compositor.

But there is a converse mode adopted by a different class of preachers which is scarcely less reprehensible ; namely, that of preparing for the pulpit as actors prepare for the stage, by committing to memory every word that is to be recited before a congregation. These, in their endeavours to avoid the dangers of Scylla, are engulfed in the whirlpool of Charybdis. Apart from the incessant toil which such a mode

must necessarily impose upon preachers who have frequently to appear before the same congregation, it has *little* of the character, *less* of the unction, and *least* of the effect of the living Gospel ministry. This mode, in skilful hands, may communicate *light* to the understanding, but it rarely imparts *heat* to the soul. It was the judicious advice given by a distinguished lay divine :

“ Never to your notes be so enslaved
As to repress some instantaneous thought
That may, like lightning, flash upon the soul,
And blaze in strength and majesty divine.”

It may seriously be questioned whether sermons can be previously arranged for general use ; for, according to the different shades of ignorance or knowledge in different spheres, a sermon might be too elementary, or too full and enlarged, or not sufficiently systematic or detailed, and, therefore, to a great extent, inappropriate. This animadversion of the slavish use of foreign resources does not imply that every sentiment or sentence in a sermon should be, strictly speaking, original. The habit of reading will furnish many illustrations and trains of thought, which are insensibly moulded into our minds, and become our own by an individual method of application. Thus, whilst we learn from all, we may almost be said to borrow from none. The fruits of personal study, aided by an acquaintance with the moral condition of the people, and blent with the incense of devotional feeling, will generally prevent the complaint of ministerial barrenness.

In memoriter preaching, one faculty—namely, the memory—is heavily taxed, whilst the understanding, the judgment, and the spiritual affections are unemployed. In process of time these sink, by desuetude, into inertness and degeneracy. The effects of memoriter preaching are very much like those produced by stage representation,—evanescent and

ineffective. In some of Shakspeare's tragedies, the emotions which are pent up during the successive incidents of the drama, burst their barriers the instant the catastrophe has been announced. The touching details in some departments of life's sad history frequently draw deeply on the well-springs of the heart; but these are mere sympathetic emotions, which show a simple conformity of nature, as expressing the interchange of kindred feelings, and cease with the occasion which called them forth. Besides, in memoriter preaching there is a great temptation held out to preachers to commit the sin of plagiarism,—of purloining the sentiments and language of men of talent and learning, and then taking the produce of their literary thefts into the pulpit, and solemnly invoking upon them the blessing of the Holy Spirit.

The late Dr. Adam Clarke, one of the brightest ornaments of the Wesleyan-Methodist body, has had few ministerial compeers in proper extemporaneous preaching. His sermons were fine specimens of pulpit elocution; his manner was dignified, his language chaste, his illustrations familiar; his conceptions, however grand and lofty, were reduced to the ordinary standards of capacity; and his uniform aim was to improve both the heads and the hearts of his hearers. A short time before he became a local preacher, his memory became so much impaired as to be of little service to him—he could recollect nothing distinctly.* But this he afterwards considered a wise dispensation of a kind Providence.

* It must be admitted that the memory is one of those faculties which contribute to promote the happiness of life. "There is a near relation between memory, reminiscence, and recollection. But what is the difference between them? Wherein do they differ from each other? Is not memory a natural faculty of the mind, which is exerted in various ways? And does it not exert itself, sometimes in simply remembering, sometimes in reminiscence, or recollection? In simply remembering things the mind of man appears to be rather passive than active. Whether we will or no,

“Had my memory,” says he, “been as circumstantially perfect as it once was, I should no doubt have depended much on it, less on God, and, perhaps, neglected the cultivation of my understanding and judgment. In a word, I should have done probably what many eminent memoriters have done, especially some preachers,—meanly stole the words from my neighbours, being able to repeat verbatim the sermon I had heard, and delivered it in the pulpit as if it were my own. I have, therefore, been obliged to depend much on the continual assistance of God in my ministerial labours, and cultivate my judgment and understanding to the uttermost of my power ; for I never dared to expect the Divine assistance and unction so essentially necessary for me, unless I had previously exercised my judgment and understanding as far as possible. Now, strange as it may appear, from this very circumstance,—the verbal imperfection of my memory,—I have preached, perhaps, five thousand sermons, on all kinds of subjects, and on a great variety of occasions ; *and did not know beforehand one single sentence that I should utter.* And were I to preach before the two universities, I must preach in this way, or not at all.”

A course equidistant from the above extremes, as applicable to preachers generally, and especially to local preachers, appears to be most in accordance with the true character and objects of the Christian Ministry. No instructions, on this head, appear to be more appropriate than those which

we remember many things which we have heard or seen, said or done ; especially if they were attended with any remarkable pleasure or pain. But in reminiscence, or recalling what is past, the mind appears to be active. Most times, at least, we may or may not recall them as we please. Recollection seems to imply something more than simple reminiscence ; even the studious collecting and gathering up together all the facts of a conversation or transaction which had occurred before, but had in some measure escaped from the memory.”—*Wesley's Works.*

are given by Bishop Burnet, in his "Pastoral Care :—" "He that intends truly to preach the Gospel, and not himself : he that is more concerned to do good to others than to raise his own fame, or to procure a following after himself ; and that makes this the measure of all his meditations and sermons, that he may put things in the best light, and recommend them with the most advantage to his people ; that reads the Scriptures much, and meditates often upon them, and prays earnestly to God for direction in his labours and for a blessing upon them ; that directs his chief endeavours to the most important and most indispensable, as well as the most undeniable, duties of religion ; and chiefly to the inward reformation of his hearers' hearts, which will certainly draw all other lesser matter after it ; and that does not spend his time nor his zeal upon lesser or disputable points ;—this man, so made and so moulded, cannot miscarry in his work. He will certainly succeed to some degree : the word spoken by him shall not return again. He shall have his crown and his reward from his labours. And to say all that can be said in one word, with St. Paul, ' He shall save both himself and them that hear him.'"

"Preaching," says the Rev. C. Bridges, in his work on the Christian Ministry, "in order to be effective, must be reduced from vague generalities to a tangible, individual character, coming home to every man's business, and even to his bosom. The slumbering routine of customary attendance is continued. Nothing but the preacher's blow,—the hand not lifted towards him, but actually reaching him,—will rouse the man to consideration. There is no need of the mention of the name, The truth brought into contact with the conscience speaks for itself. The general sermons, which are preached to everybody, are, in fact, preached to nobody.

They will, therefore, suit the congregations of the last century, or in a foreign land, just as well as the people before our eyes." "Such discourses," says Bishop Stillingfleet, "have commonly little effect on the people's minds ; but, if anything moves them, it is a particular application as to such things in which their consciences are concerned." To be effectual, we must preach *to* our people, as well as *before* them. The conscience of the audience should *feel* the hand of the preacher searching it, and every individual know in what particular class to place himself.*

It has been well observed, that the secret of effective preaching consists in its adaptation to the capacities of those to be instructed. It may be Scriptural in its statements, experimental in its character, and practical in its application ; indeed, it may have all the distinguishing features of analysis, discrimination, and perspicuity ; yet, if it be above the mental standard of those to whom it is addressed, it must necessarily fail in accomplishing the end it proposes. The discourses of the Saviour are totally devoid of artificial oratory. Though they frequently abound with the most striking imagery, yet they are perfect models of simplicity. Whenever he borrowed illustrations from nature, his comparisons, or figures, were usually taken from the objects around him ; and, whilst the subjects were perfectly familiar to his hearers, his mode

* When John the Baptist preached before Herod on Gospel generalities, he "heard him gladly," and "did many things" ; but when he came to apply his subject, "It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife," the preacher lost his head. "A minister," says Hildersham, "should have some knowledge of each man's particular case, to enable him to guide his application with particular effect. Though he may not make private faults public, or so touch the sin as to note and disgrace the sinner, yet he may apply his reproofs with such effect, as that the guilty party may know and feel himself touched with the reproof. Doctrine should be like a garment, fitted to the body it is made for ; a garment that is fit for everybody, is fit for nobody."

of explaining and applying them was perfectly intelligible. The Apostles closely followed the type. They felt themselves to be equally "debtors to the wise and to the unwise." If they never sunk beneath the dignity of the subject, they never soared above the intelligence of their hearers. They ordinarily used "great plainness of speech." It is true, the Apostle Paul occasionally alluded to the Grecian games when preaching before persons who were well acquainted with them, and who would, therefore, be well able to estimate the force of the allusion ; but all the apostolic preaching and writing, though remarkable for perspicuity, is brought down to the level of the meanest capacity. "Florid preaching," says an old writer, "is like painting the windows, and shutting out the clear light of heaven." To think of adding perspicuity or adornment to sermons, by the study of oratory or the embellishments of diction, is something like attempting to increase the natural beauties of the rainbow by artificial colouring. The Apostle's aim was to find words "easy to be understood." But we are told that education has taken an elastic spring, and, therefore, pulpit oratory, to be acceptable, must keep pace with the advancement of intellectual improvement. This, if admissible at all, would prove too much ; because, to make Christianity throughout in keeping with it, we must modernise the Bible, remove all its antiquated terms and idioms, introduce classical phraseology, and altogether put it in a more fashionable dress. The measure of capacity ought to be the measure of speech. Flowers in sermons are like flowers in corn-fields,—they variegate the landscape, but are most mischievous to the farmer. There is nothing like plain food for the sustentation of life. Confectionery has introduced many stimulants to the palate ; but, as Addison observed, death often lies in ambuscade among

dishes of highly-finished sweetmeats. There is something very attractive in human oratory ; but the charm usually ceases with the music. We occasionally hear in sermons elaborate reasonings, metaphysical dissertations, scholastic refinements, curious researches, ingenious distinctions, critical elucidations, and abstruse proofs of facts and evidences. They astonish, perplex, and confound, but they impart neither light nor heat.

In connection with plainness of speech, a minister should use affectionate entreaty, "speaking the truth in love ;" as no mode is more conducive to be reconciled to God. The method recommended by the pious and amiable Archbishop of Cambray, was, to address a congregation with the generous energy of a father, blended *with the exuberant affection of a mother*.* The Apostle's direction to Timothy, was, to "exhort with all longsuffering." "This," says Bishop Stillingfleet, "is like stroking the conscience with feathers dipped in oil." There is a class of preachers who, though we do not doubt their piety, give us great reason to question their prudence. They mingle "strange fire" with the "live coals from the altar of God." In delivering the denunciations of Divine wrath, they combine human passions with religious zeal, and appear to give vent to their own angry displeasure, rather than describe the holy indignation of God. It is certainly of great importance that the Gospel should be fully and faithfully exhibited,—that there should be no overweening tenderness on the one hand, nor presumptuous rashness on the other. To withhold or conceal the threatenings of the Gospel is a fearful perversion of the truth ; but to hurl the thunders of Divine vengeance in a light and careless manner, is to incur

* There is a French proverb, not less trite than true, that a drop of honey will catch more flies than a pint of vinegar.

that rebuke of the Saviour, "Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of." To expect spiritual effect from vehemence of manner, from theatrical gesture, or from the unnatural elevation of the voice, is to look for the Lord "in the whirlwind and the earthquake," rather than in "the still small voice." Love has an electric attraction, and when seen in the looks, and language, and manner of a preacher, irresistibly commends itself to the best feelings of the heart. How affecting is the plaintive wail which the Saviour poured over devoted Jerusalem: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thee, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, but ye would not." What pathos and tenderness breathes through his prayer for his murderers: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." The sainted Fletcher once remarked, with reference to the ministerial office, that "love, continual, universal, ardent love, is the *soul of all the work of a minister!*"

PART III.

THE CHARACTER, QUALIFICATIONS, DUTIES, RESPONSIBILITIES, OBJECTS, AND RESULTS OF THE MINISTRY.

“ Now, then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us : we pray you in Christ’s stead, be ye reconciled to God.”—2 Corinth. v., 20.

“ For we preach not ourselves, but Christ Jesus the Lord ; and ourselves your servants for Jesus’ sake.”—2 Corinth. iv., 5.



The Local or Lay Ministry.

CHAPTER I.

CHARACTER OF THE MINISTRY—REMARKS ON THE DIACONAL OFFICE—
LOCAL PREACHERS NOT CONNECTED WITH THE DIACONATE—ANALOGY
BETWEEN MINISTERS AND AMBASSADORS—MINISTERIAL RESPONSIBILITY.

“ Be this our joy, to calm the troubled breast,
Support the weak, and succour the distrest ;
Direct the wand’rer, dry the widow’s tear,
The orphan guard, the sinking spirits cheer :
Though small our pow’r to act, though mean our skill,
God sees the heart, he judges by the will.”

FROM the earliest period of sacred history, we have incidental notices of religious instruction having been communicated to mankind by means of preaching. The references occasionally made to Enoch and Noah seem to connect the institution of preaching with the antediluvian era. Under the patriarchal dispensation, each house appears to have had its domestic sanctuary and altar, and the head of the family was the priest. In the Jewish economy, Moses received his commission immediately from God, and was first assisted by Aaron, and afterwards, as the people increased in number, by seventy elders. During the administration of Joshua, that distinguished chief frequently collected the people to hear the message of Jehovah. Following the stream of time, we read of the schools of the prophets, which became the

acknowledged institutions for public teaching throughout the land. After the captivity, preaching seems to have been adopted in a manner not very dissimilar to the forms which prevail under the Christian dispensation. Ezra, the priest, is said to have occupied a pulpit, surrounded by his congregation ; to have expounded the law, and to have received the responses of the people to the expositions and interpretations he laid before them. That, during the prophetic period, the prophets preached to the people, can admit of little doubt ; as, interwoven with their predictions, we have many addresses and appeals, which had a primary application to the times in which they were respectively delivered. The opening of the dispensation under which we have the glory to live was distinguished by the institution of the Christian Ministry, together with the spirit and mode of its administration, by Jesus Christ.

The means employed in the construction of the Christian Church, are illustrative not less of the wisdom, than of the mercy of God. Divine power was made perfect in human weakness, that no flesh should glory in his presence. Though the tender of mercy was first made to the Jews, yet, before the ascension of the Redeemer, the Gospel charter was renewed, with powers of illimitable extension : "Go ye into all the world, and preach the Gospel to every creature." Thus every step in the Divine procedure with reference to man, left the visible imprint of infinite majesty, wisdom, and goodness ; whilst the kingdom of heaven was opened to all believers, and salvation—full, free, eternal salvation—filled the entire amplitude of earth and heaven.

Douglass, in his "Advancement of Society in Knowledge and Religion," admirably illustrates the power of the Christian Ministry, as the grand agent for the conversion

of the world :—"Of all methods for diffusing religion, preaching is the most efficient. It is to preaching that Christianity owes its origin, its continuance, and its progress ; and it is to itinerating preaching (however the ignorant may undervalue it) that we owe the conversion of the Roman world from paganism to primitive Christianity ; our own freedom from the thralldom of Popery, in the success of the Reformation ; and the revival of Christianity from the depression which it had undergone, owing to the prevalence of indifference and infidelity. Books, however excellent, require, at least, some previous interest on the part of the person who is to open and peruse them. But the preacher arrests the attention, which the written Word only invites ; and the living voice, and the listening numbers, heighten the impression by the sympathy and enthusiasm which they excite ; the reality which the truths spoken possess in the mind of the speaker, is communicated to the feelings of the hearers ; and they end in sharing the same views, at least for the moment, and in augmenting each other's convictions."

The ministry of the Gospel is the grand momentum of Divine agency—the powerful engine of pastoral operation. It is the boast of our land, the glory of our age. In navigating the stormy ocean of life, we look to the ministry as our compass and chart. In prosecuting the dark and devious pathway through this waste-howling wilderness, we turn to the ministry as our directory and guide. It explains the charter of our liberties ; offers itself as the palladium of our hopes ; points to the bulwarks of our spiritual safety ; and unlocks the exhaustless treasury from which the believer draws his continuous and necessary supplies for this life and that which is to come. For eighteen centuries the Christian Ministry has stood, like the majestic rock in the midst of the

ocean, which rears its lofty head above the surrounding surges, and offers the security of its protection to the tempest-tossed traveller. Though assailed by the united subtlety and malice of human and superhuman machinations; and though, like an unprotected coast-light when threatened by the conflicts of contending gales, it has been exposed to a running fire from the scarps and counterscarps of earth and hell; yet, like an iron-bound coast, which looks down with frowning magnificence on the furious breakers which vainly lash its immoveable foundations, it wraps itself in the security of its conscious impregnability, and laughs to scorn the puny attempts of its powerless assailants.

It may be proper, in the opening of this division of the subject, to offer a remark on an opinion which has been put forth in a talented prize essay,* which bears some general affinity to the subject of the present work. The opinion is as follows :—

“ These valuable men (the Local Preachers) are properly reckoned among the diaconal body, because, from very early antiquity, deacons were wont to preach. Origen, indeed, preached before he was appointed to the ministry at all. Baxter, in his ‘Christian Ecclesiastics,’ allows the lawfulness, and even desirableness, of pious laymen engaging in this work. The good which has been done by the Local Preachers of Methodism shall only be fully known at that day when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed.”

Although the excellent author has, in these words, paid a high tribute of commendation to this useful class of labourers, it is not quite clear where the lines of resemblance between the Local Ministry and the diaconate meet. The diaconal office was created to meet a class of circumstances very different from those out of which the Local Ministry arose, and to discharge duties of a very different nature; for,

* “ An Essay on the Pastoral Office.” By the Rev. A. Barrett. 1839. Page 128.

though the deacons (at least two of them, Stephen and Philip) exercised the functions of the ministry, yet, according to Mr. Wesley, in his notes on the diaconal appointment, they did not preach in virtue of their office as deacons, but as evangelists, an office subsequently conferred upon them ; and that, on their elevation to the evangelical office, they ceased to perform diaconal duties, others being appointed to supply their places. Beza is of the same opinion. The seven deacons, whose appointment is recorded in Acts vi., were to perform duties which had previously been performed by the Apostles. The converts to Christianity had greatly multiplied, and the Hellenistic members of the increasing community conceived that there was some partiality in the distribution of the public funds, and that their widows were “ neglected in the daily ministrations.” A formal complaint having been submitted to the Apostles, they convened a general assembly, and submitted that the case would best be met by the appointment of officers to attend to the necessities of the poor, and generally to manage the administration of other affairs of a secular nature. To show the impartial spirit by which the appointment was made, the whole seven, as their Greek names import, were selected from the Hellenistic members of the community. The analogy between the diaconal and ministerial offices, under the Christian dispensation, seems to be somewhat similar to that which existed between the Levitical and priestly offices under the dispensation of Moses. Whether the diaconal office in the Primitive Church conferred the right to exercise ministerial functions, it might be difficult to prove ; but, certainly, the analogy between the offices of deacons and Local Preachers must fail in one point, as secular duties, in a diaconal sense, do not fall within the legitimate province of the Local Ministry.

In presenting to the public the character, duties, responsibilities, difficulties, objects, and results of the Methodist Ministry, the author has drawn no distinction between Travelling and Local Preachers; because the lines and laws of the New Testament which define and regulate ministerial operations, are as applicable to the one department as to the other.

One of the highest and most important offices connected with the administration of State affairs is that of an ambassador,—an official designation which has been applied to ministers of the Gospel, as denoting the similarity of their functions, their trusts, and their responsibilities.

An ambassador is a high diplomatist, appointed by the Government of a country as its representative at a foreign court, to watch the interests of the country which he represents, and to keep up a friendly intercourse between the two States. He is properly the vicegerent of the Sovereign, to whom alone he is responsible for the discharge of his public functions. His powers are all but absolute,* and although, under extreme circumstances, he might be impeached, yet such an impeachment could only be sustained in a case of the grossest and most flagrant dereliction of duty. It is presumed that the Government, who are the responsible counsellors of the Sovereign, would not advise the committal of a country's welfare to an individual, whatever his social rank, unless they had the fullest possible conviction that he was naturally and morally invested with the necessary qualities for the safe exercise of the powers, and the satisfactory

*The term plenipotentiary (*i. e.*, ambassador) is compounded of two Latin words which literally signify *plenitude of power*; power without limit as to all the points contained in the diploma of this important state functionary.

discharge of the duties, of his high commission. It is easy to conceive, that, with such an amplitude of power, and power resting on such sanctions, an ambassador might betray his trust, and sacrifice his country ; and there is no officer of a Government whose powers require to be exercised with greater delicacy, and caution, and fidelity, than those of an ambassador. Take a case for illustration. An ambassador conceives an insult is offered to his nation. He communicates his own version of the insult to the Government under which he acts. Reparation is demanded and refused. A war is proclaimed, and a hundred thousand men are slaughtered to settle the dispute. From all this it appears that an ambassador should possess rare qualifications, and should never allow private considerations to interfere with the requirements of public duty.

It requires no great amount of dialectical skill to draw practical inferences from these clear and unmistakeable premises. If the official responsibilities of an ambassador rise in proportion to the relative dignity of the Sovereign whom he represents, then we see at a glance the incomparably greater amount of responsibility which attaches to the office of an ambassador of the Sovereign of the universe. Were an earthly ambassador, by secret intrigues, to betray his country, he might be attainted of high treason, and suffer the highest penalty the laws of his country could inflict,—which is temporal death ; but the violation of the responsible trusts confided by the Almighty to his delegates, or ambassadors, is threatened with the pains and penalties of endless damnation ! In both cases the crime and punishment are commensurate. As all our modes of comparison fail to show the disparity between God and man, between finity and infinity in crime, so we are equally at fault in bringing our

conceptions to comprehend the relative deserts of guilt, in their opposite application to time and to eternity.

These preliminary observations will be sufficient to prepare the mind for receiving in detail such particulars as may serve to surround with greater light, and to invest with greater importance, the highest, the most honourable, and the most responsible office which it is possible for man to hold.

CHAPTER II.

GOSPEL COMMISSION — MINISTERIAL QUALIFICATIONS — TALENT NECESSARY FOR PREACHERS—STUDY NECESSARY TO PRODUCE EFFECT—READING—NARROW POLICY OF THE BOOK-ROOM—NECESSITY OF SPIRITUAL INFLUENCE—MINISTERIAL IMPEDIMENTS ; HOW TO BE MET AND REMEDIED.

IN laying before his readers the character of a Gospel minister, the author has adopted the idea contained in 2 Cor. v., 20, in its application to Methodist preachers ; not only because it is an idea suggested by the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, entitled to the gravest consideration ; but because it embraces a number of details which serve to throw additional light on the general subject.

The Gospel commission is set out in general terms in Ezek. iii., 17—21 inclusive, and repeated with some additions in Ezek. xxxiii., 7 and following verses ; and although it was framed considerably more than two thousand years ago, and applied to a state of society very differently constituted, in many circumstantial respects, from that which now exists, yet, as the broad outlines of man's moral condition presents the same substantial features, and as mankind generally remain in a state of alienation and hostility, that commission, which has never been repealed, retains all the force and authority with which it was invested when it first received the signature, and seal, and sanction of the King of kings.

“ Son of man, I have made thee a watchman unto the house of Israel ; therefore, hear the word at my mouth, and give them warning from me. When I say unto the wicked, Thou shalt surely die, and thou givest

him not warning, nor speakest to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, the same wicked man shall die in his iniquity, but his blood will I require at thine hands. Yet if thou warn the wicked, and he turn not from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his iniquity ; but thou hast delivered thy soul. Again, when a righteous man doth turn from his righteousness and commit iniquity, and I lay a stumbling-block before him, he shall die : because thou hast not given him warning, he shall die in his sin, and his righteousness which he hath done shall not be remembered ; but his blood will I require at thine hand. Nevertheless, if thou warn the righteous man, that the righteous sin not, and he doth not sin, he shall surely live, because he is warned ; also thou hast delivered thy soul."

In all states in which embassies are exchanged, they are laid under mutual obligations to avoid whatever might interrupt the exercise of friendly relations, or provoke the spirit of national hostility : in fact, to preserve perpetual peace by cultivating commerce and the arts ; and the stipulations of their respective treaties are intended to provide against any adverse contingency which might fall within the range of human foresight. In this view of the case the parallel fails ; because, as man is in a state of guilt and condemnation, there can be no mutuality of advantage : all the benefit must be on one side ; and, therefore, as the Almighty has framed a treaty of mercy and reconciliation, and commissioned his heralds to publish it throughout the world, it becomes at once the interest and the duty of man to adopt the counsels and recommendations it embodies ; to discharge the practical stipulations and duties it demands ; that he may stand in security when the destroying angel shall pour out upon the world the last vials of God's avenging wrath.

To discharge with proper effect the duties of an ambassador, it is necessary that he should have a correct knowledge of international law ; should perfectly understand the nature, bearings, application, and results of the powers with which he is entrusted ; and should have sufficient judgment

to exercise, with sound discretion, the responsible functions on which the successful issue of his embassy depends.

On the question of qualification for the Christian ministry, much diversity of opinion has been, and is still, entertained. All human standards have differed, less or more, on this point. The Society of Friends, a most pious, unassuming, and excellent body, repudiate the cultivation of scholastic science altogether, as a pre-requisite for the ministerial office. They consider that their ministers are endued with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, whenever they officiate ministerially; and that the adventitious aids of human learning are not only unnecessary, but would, if employed, be an infraction of primitive laws, fraught with presumption and pregnant with danger. On the other hand, the Established Church of this country has set up a converse standard, and requires, as a *sine qua non*, that all candidates for ministerial appointments should possess what the Universities deem a competent knowledge of Greek, Latin, mathematics, logic, natural, moral, and political philosophy, with other educational *et ceteras*. Were the author disposed to form a comparative judgment on these ultra-ministerial notions, he should certainly give it in favour of the Friends, whose mode of conveying religious instruction unquestionably comes much nearer to the primitive standard than that of the Church of England. Perhaps the point lies somewhere between these two extremes; but whether equidistant, or otherwise, the author has not the presumption to decide.

It cannot be denied that human learning, when brought under the hallowed influence of the grace of God, is a valuable acquisition to a preacher of the Gospel, and has frequently been employed with telling effect by the pious

messenger of mercy ; but were it the only, or indeed the chief, qualification for a successful discharge of ministerial functions, then a very large proportion of the Local or Lay Ministry must retire from the work in which they are engaged.

The author is of opinion that every minister of Methodism, itinerant or local, should be a man of talent. But it is important that the term talent should be properly defined, and distinctions drawn between the talent which is natural, and that which is acquired. In strictness, talent, which is a cognate quality or endowment of the mind, cannot be acquired by artificial means. It may be improved in various ways, and extended by various degrees ; but it is an integral part of our nature, and, therefore, not to be obtained at the Universities, or other seats of human learning.* It is true, that we use the terms talent and education synonymously, but that corruption in use does not at all affect the distinctions between them. A man may possess a considerable amount of talent, who has acquired but a very slender education, and *vice versâ* ; and although the acquisitions of logic, mathematics, and other abstract sciences, cannot be obtained without talent, yet a man may be a clever linguist, provided his memory possess a full amount of efficiency, almost without any talent at all.

Now, the Methodist Local Preachers, as a body, possess a considerable amount of native talent ; and though many of them are not favoured with extensive educational advantages,

* Dr. Samuel Johnson was once attempting to make himself understood by a man, whose natural endowments were somewhat below par. After unsuccessfully placing his proposition in different ways, in order to bring it within his comprehension, the person said to the doctor, with some *naïvete*, " I don't exactly understand you." " Don't you?" said the cynical philosopher, " I don't wonder at that ; I can give you arguments, but I cannot give you brains."

yet their experimental and practical acquaintance with doctrinal and preceptive Christianity, and their familiar and prayerful mode of explaining and applying their valuable knowledge, has far more effect with rural and uneducated congregations than the most finished and laboured exhibitions of scholastic divinity.*

Upon the whole, therefore, it may safely be contended that piety stands at the head of ministerial qualifications; and that the success of preaching will generally be in proportion to the depth and fervour of the piety of the preacher. There is some reason to fear that our Connexional piety does not keep pace with our numerical advancement. Our general ministry is certainly much more educated than it was half-a-century ago; but whether the increase of education in the ministry has generated a corresponding increase of personal holiness, may be seriously questioned. The complimentary remark of a distinguished writer, that "Methodism contains the elements of perpetuity," had probably more reference, in that writer's mind, to the wise policy displayed in its general constitution, than to the elements by which it was to be fed and regulated in its working power. Methodism is essentially connexional. It recognises the principle of combination, through all its departments, as the mainspring of its power; and to the practical development of that

* Collins was what is termed a free-thinker; *i.e.*, an infidel. One day he met a plain countryman going to church, and feeling a little disposed to banter the rustic, he said to him, "Where are you going?" "To Church, sir," was the reply. "What do you go to Church for?" "I worship God, sir." "Pray, is your God great or little?" "He is both, sir." "Indeed! Pray how do you make that out?" "Why, sir, he's so great that the heaven of heavens can't contain him, and so little, that he can dwell in my heart." Collins was silent; but afterwards ingenuously confessed, that the simple answer of the rustic had more effect on his mind than all the elaborate treatises he had read in defence of Christianity.

principle it stands indebted, under God, for the distinguished position it has acquired among the denominational sections of the Anglican Church.

On this branch of the subject it may be proper to introduce a few points which exert a greater or less degree of influence on the labours of the Methodist ministry.

It is of great importance that every Methodist Local Preacher should bring all his arrangements for the pulpit under the stern regulation of well-digested, methodised plans, which will do far more, as aids to his ministry, than the mere acquisition of academical erudition.

No man can succeed, as a preacher of the Gospel, without deep devotional study, in order to acquire the best facilities for securing the objects of his mission. It would be to little purpose, in any department of mechanical science, to have the best materials, unless there were a sufficient amount of skill to use them. The one belongs to the *theory* of the science, the other to its *practice*. The labours of the study are confined to the science of theology ; but the labours of the pulpit show the application of that science to practical results.

Study, to be really advantageous to ministers and people, should be so mechanically regulated, as to bring it within the rules of disciplinary method. The author is well aware that it would be next to impossible to lay down rules of study, applicable to all the social conditions of the Local Ministry ; but every one must see the importance of having some rule on the subject. The good Philip Henry has bequeathed to his ministerial legatees a valuable piece of advice on this head : “ If we cannot do what *we will*, let us do what *we can*.” Seneca, though a heathen moralist, has taught us a most valuable part of Christian duty : “ It is a virtue to be

covetous of time ;” that is, to be like the miser, saving with care, and spending with caution. A man without an object is an idle man ; and the Spaniards have a proverb, “ that the devil tempts every man but the idle man, and he tempts the devil.” Boyle, in his “ Reflections,” says, “ it is of great importance to have the parentheses, or interludes of time, filled up profitably, so as to tell beneficially on the general economy.”

“ Patient application,” says Professor Miller in his Letters, “ is literally everything. Without it you may have a number of half-formed ideas floating in your mind ; but deep, connected, large, and consistent views of any subject you will never gain. Impatient haste is the bane of deep intellectual work. If you are investigating any important doctrine, be not ready to leave it. Come to it again and again, seeking light from every quarter, and perusing with attention the best books, until you have entered as far as you are capable into its profoundest merits ; and, if compelled by any circumstance to leave the subject before you have reached this point, hold it in reserve for another and more satisfactory examination. In short, let your motto be, to leave nothing until you have thoroughly mastered it.”

There is generally, among our young Local Preachers, too much haste in the acquirement of knowledge. They seem to expect it to fall from the clouds ; and, therefore, they do not enter calmly and patiently upon the study of subjects to which their thoughts are directed. Hence arises that injurious habit of *skimming* books, rather than of *reading* them. The mind, by hovering on the surface, gains only a confused recollection of the more prominent facts and incidents ;—far too imperfect a knowledge for any purposes of practical utility.

Much discretion is required in reading. "A little study," says Burnet, "well digested in a good and serious mind, will go a great way, and lay in materials for a whole life." It is possible to read a great deal, and digest very little; in which case the result is on the wrong side. Large quantities of food taken into the stomach require time, in order that the digestive organs may properly perform their functions. Were it otherwise, internal derangement would produce the most mischievous consequences to the physical economy. And the mind, if surcharged with an incongruous mass of materials, is unable to perform its functions properly, and so sinks under the accumulated pressure. Quesnel has left on record some valuable observations on this point:—

"Not to read or study at all, is to tempt God; to do nothing but study is to forget God; to study only to glory in one's knowledge, is a shameful vanity; to study in search of means to flatter souls, is a deplorable prevarication; but to store one's mind with the knowledge proper to the saints by study and prayer, and to diffuse that knowledge in solid instructions and practical exhortations, is to be a prudent, zealous, and laborious minister."

After all our preparations, the oratory is the best place to obtain pulpit power. The chief of the *direct* qualifications for Gospel preaching is *piety*, and *collateral* advantages will profit little unless they are connected with the influence of the Holy Ghost.

In close alliance with the study for pulpit exercises, may be mentioned a well-digested course of reading, to furnish material, and to give effect to the discipline of the mind, in analysing its subjects for the public ministry.

Although it would be difficult to make a selection of books for Local Preachers, which would adapt itself to the pecuniary resources, mental standard, or educational acquirements of every member of the Lay Ministry, yet a hint on that head may

not be thrown away. And here the author is free to express a regret that the Wesleyan Book-room should virtually close its doors against local preachers, by its extremely high scale of charges. The author is not ignorant, that Local Preachers are allowed, under certain restrictions, a deduction from the published prices ; but when that deduction is made, it generally leaves the work something like fifteen or twenty per cent. higher than the charges of other booksellers. The author is of opinion that local preachers should be allowed to purchase all works printed under the authority of Conference at *half the published price* ; and that liberality would not be felt detrimentally to that branch of the Connexional funds. Every Local Preacher ought to read Wesley's Sermons, and Fletcher's works ; they would give him clear views of the doctrinal economy of Methodism. As the generality of our Local Preachers have little time to read books for mere general gratification, they should select such as are calculated to aid their main design ; namely, the obtainment of knowledge for the promotion of Christianity. The extension of knowledge supplies materials for practical purposes ; it stores the mind with subjects calculated to increase the general interest ; it leads to diversified modes of instruction ; and protects the ministerial office from that contempt to which an inferiority of general knowledge on the part of a preacher exposes him. No intelligent congregation will accept mere effusions of enthusiasm, or noisy declamation, as a substitute for the materials of solid thought.

The author has not the presumption to give a catalogue of books for the varied purposes of the Lay Ministry. He is aware that it is far more easy to furnish a library with books on divinity, than to furnish the understanding with the elements of useful instruction. A man may have read

extensively, even on theological subjects, and yet be a mere tyro in theology, as to its useful application. The possession of a well-stored library does not necessarily infer the possession of a well-stored mind. Dr. Watts, in his "Improvement of the Mind," has the following truthful observation: "A well-furnished library, and a capacious memory, are indeed of singular use towards the improvement of the mind; but if all your learning be nothing else but an amassment of what others have written, without a due penetration into its meaning, and without a judicious choice and determination of your own sentiments, I do not see what title your head has to true learning above your shelves." Archbishop Usher, true to the character of a Christian Minister and a divine, gives the following directions to students for the ministry: "Read and study the Scriptures carefully, wherein is the best learning, and only infallible truth. They will furnish you with the best materials for your sermons; *the only rules of faith and practice*; the most powerful motives to persuade and convince the conscience; and the strongest arguments to confute all errors, heresies, and schisms. *Take not hastily up with other men's opinions; but compare them, first, with the analogy of faith, and rules of holiness, recorded in the Scriptures, which are the proper tests of all opinions and doctrine.*"

But it must not be forgotten, that, after all available means and appliances have been used by a preacher of the Gospel, that human agency will effect little in the work of salvation apart from the influence of that Spirit, "without whom nothing is wise, or strong, or holy."

Much valuable information on spiritual subjects is frequently drawn from the contemplation of natural causes and effects. In the cultivation of the soil we observe an almost infinite variety of results from one common class of

causes. A large farm may be cultivated throughout on exactly the same principles ; but almost every field will show a difference of result. Some soils are light, and some heavy. Some are rich and fruitful, others sterile and barren ; and after all the care and cultivation of man, if the refreshing showers and the solar influence be withheld, all human efforts must end in failure and disappointment. It is precisely so in the ministerial economy. Preachers may plough, and sow, and cultivate their respective fields of labour according to the best methods of ministerial husbandry ; yet, if the refreshing dew of the Spirit, and the genial warmth of the Sun of Righteousness, be not vouchsafed, the efforts of men will be powerless and vain. The divine Charnock asks : “ Can a well-composed oration, setting out all the advantages of life and health, raise a dead man or cure a diseased body ? You may as well exhort a blind man to behold the sun. No man ever yet imagined that the strewing a dead body with flowers would raise it to life ; no more can the urging a man spiritually dead, with eloquent motives, even make him open his eyes, or stand upon his feet. A new suasion does not confer a strength ; it only persuadeth him to use the power which he hath already.” Whatever zeal and energy may be expended in preaching the Gospel of salvation, until the Spirit be poured from on high, the wilderness, notwithstanding the most diligent cultivation, must remain a wilderness still.

The preacher of the Gospel, whether Itinerant or Local, cannot be too deeply sensible of his own insufficiency in the work of saving souls. It was the trembling exclamation of the great Apostle to the Gentiles, on a prayerful contemplation of the magnitude of his ministerial enterprise, viewed in contrast with the sense he entertained of his general want of

fitness for so important a work,—“Who is sufficient for these things!” Indeed, were not ministerial sufficiency of God, the ministry must be at once abandoned in utter despair by every human being, whatever the quality of his talent or the amount of his piety. The subjects of the Christian ministry present such a variety of aspect, and are armed with such weighty responsibilities, that to approach the office without a due sense of human incompetence, would be an act marked by presumption and fraught with danger.

To obtain a correct representation of the ministerial office, it is important to grasp the Gospel, not merely in its general outline, but in its character, claims, duties, privileges, weals, woes, and other details, in their diversified application to the ever-varying presentments of the human character. The calculations sometimes founded on the opposition which an ungodly world presents, the barrenness of ministerial labour, the inconstancy of some professors and the inconsistency of others, with many considerations of a kindred nature, frequently lead the faithful minister to mourn in secret places before the Lord, and to break forth in the plaintive language of the weeping Prophet: “O that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people.” —Jer. ix., 1.

But the Word of God has its delightful counterpoises. “As is thy day, so shall be thy strength.” “Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world.” “In due time ye shall reap, if you faint not.” “If in the world ye have tribulation, in me ye have peace.” Does Job sink beneath the weight of his complicated calamities? Let him answer the question: “Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.” Does David yield to his discouragements and trials? Listen:

"Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for thou art with me ; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Do Paul's trials evoke complaint? Hear him : " I reckon that the sufferings of the present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." Let it never be forgotten, that He who

" Tempers the wind to the shorn lamb,"

will connect support with conflict, invigoration with toil, encouragement with difficulty, reward with labour, and will crown grace with glory. Many natural causes contribute to create discouragement in the mind of a faithful preacher of the Gospel, arising out of the local difficulties with which he may be surrounded. The kingdom of God may be established in saving power, with but little outward observation. Preachers have to do with principles : consequences are not under their control. The labour is with them : the result is with God. Pictorial representations, if dexterously executed, may receive much enchantment from the skill of the artist ; but no picture of the sun, however beautifully displayed on canvass, can impart heat. The most attractive paintings of rural scenery do not give living verdure to fields, nor hang with real fruit the beautifully-pendant branches. Fire may be painted so as to give it the distant effect of reality, but it sends forth no warmth. The human figure may be so placed on the canvass as to bring out all its proportions in the nicest order ; but, as Shakspeare says, " there is no speculation in the eyes which it doth glare with." Buffon, the great naturalist, has justly remarked, that no arrangement of matter can give mind. There may be the external similitude, the exact profile, the correct lineaments, the perfect outline ; but the life is wanting ; and as the body

would be formed for limited ends if it had not a soul to direct its operations, so the soul, if not fed and led by Divine influences, will have served but few of the purposes of its original creation. No man can properly discharge the duties of the living ministry who has not realised in his own experience the translation from nature to grace—unless he have travelled from the City of Destruction, as far as the house of the Interpreter, in his progress to the celestial city. A preacher possessed of a strong mind and highly imaginative powers might, without experimental religion, gratify the taste and contribute to the pleasure of persons whose hearts were not strongly imbued with the love of God ; but gratification is one thing, and edification another.

Delightful as is the work of the ministry, when the heart glows with generous emotions, and when all the powers are moving in the right direction, yet that work is not without its drawbacks. Impediments, huge and gigantic, sometimes rear their towering heads, and, like Apollyon, spread their dragon wings over the entire breadth of the way. It can excite little astonishment in the contemplative mind, that the work of evangelising the human soul, considering the natural constitution of man, and the varied influences which are constantly exerted by adverse agencies, both human and superhuman, that its advances should be met by impediments at every step it takes in the way to heaven. Without reducing these impediments to categorical distinctions, and showing the amount of positive or relative influence they respectively exert, it may be sufficient to glance at a few which are less dependent on the intrinsic character of the ministry, than on the extrinsic causes which connect themselves with different spheres of ministerial labour. Thus, a large manufacturing town, where different classes of the

inhabitants become associated in large masses, presents many obstructions to ministerial usefulness, which have no existence in rural districts, where the facilities of intercommunication between individuals are "few and far between." The moral state of the lower classes in Liverpool, Manchester, Birmingham, and other large towns, to say nothing of London, is perfectly horrifying. Drunkenness and prostitution, with their usual concomitants, prevail to a frightful extent ; and, through a morbid delicacy, these sinks of iniquity are never religiously visited,—at least, with any practical effect ; and thus those who are grown old in crime are left to form the unformed habits of the youth of both sexes, who too aptly learn the seductive lessons which are taught in such schools of infamy and vice. It will be at once conceded, that the almost moral impossibility of penetrating the dense masses of population in the great hives of iniquity, or of isolating the several component parts, renders it extremely difficult to carry personal instruction, or rebuke, to individual consciences ; a thing so essential to the success of the pulpit ministry. Even the different denominational sections of the Church of Christ, though recognising in common the grand fundamental doctrines of Christianity, are, nevertheless, so extremely jealous of their own peculiar modes of faith and forms of church government, that they consider the framework of their separate communities to be endangered, in proportion as they admit the spirit of general unity. This necessarily weakens the native power of the ministry. "Even," says Bridges, "if the respective ministers are men of forbearance and brotherly love, and, in the true spirit of their commission, lay far more stress upon points of agreement than upon points of difference, still it is not likely that the same spirit should universally spread through their

congregations ; and the defect of this mutual forbearance, often called forth by comparative trifles, reminds us, in its baneful consequences, of the observation of St. James, ‘ Behold how great a matter a little fire kindleth ! ’ ” Were the general ministry of the Gospel properly organised, combined, and directed against the several points of attack, success would be far more commensurate with its power of operation ; and the visible effects would stand out more prominently, as so many practical exhibitions of the saving influence of the grace of God.

CHAPTER III.

DUTIES OF THE CHRISTIAN MINISTRY—VARIOUS KINDS OF PREACHING—MR. WESLEY'S DIRECTIONS ON PREACHING—NECESSITY OF EXHIBITING, WITH DUE PROMINENCE, THE DISTINGUISHING DOCTRINES OF CHRISTIANITY: FAITH, THE NEW BIRTH, THE WITNESS OF THE SPIRIT, JUSTIFICATION, AND SANCTIFICATION—WHY PREACHING PRODUCES SO LITTLE EFFECT—EVENING SOIREES, THEIR MISCHIEVOUS TENDENCY—ROBERT HALL'S OPINION—ANECDOTES OF THE REV. JAMES HERVEY.

ON the right discharge of the duties of the Christian Ministry greatly depends the salvation of a lost world. It may at once be presumed, that an embassy of such immeasurable moment must be charged with important duties, as well as invested with responsible powers; and that everything must be in keeping with the dignity of the Sovereign from whom it has emanated.

The ministerial office has two great objects: the one intermediate, the other ultimate. The first of these objects is set out in 2 Cor. v., 20: "Now then we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us; we pray you in Christ's stead, be ye reconciled to God." The first business, therefore, is to bring about a reconciliation between God and his rebel subjects; and then to carry on the intermediate work, until the two objects are amalgamated in the crowning consummation.

The duties of a preacher require a considerable acquaintance with constructive Christianity, and such a knowledge of the state of his people as may guide him in the selection of

his subjects, and give tone and effect to the practical application of the subjects selected. The recommendation given by the Rev. Legh Richmond to a brother minister is full of importance :—"Never preach a single sermon from which an unenlightened hearer might not learn the plan of salvation, even though he never afterwards heard another sermon. Sin and salvation are the two grand subjects of our preaching, and they ought to be brought forward unceasingly, both doctrinally, practically, and above all, *experimentally*. Preach *from* the heart, and it will always reach *to* the heart."

In preaching, it is not enough to be instructive. Mere didactical discourses will seldom yield a profitable return. The minister should take a higher aim. Many preachers are exceedingly dictatorial, and appear to try the method of dragooning their congregations into obedience. Others are very argumentative, employing a good deal of logical skill, to establish, by learned proofs *à priori* and *à posteriori*, what everybody believes—namely, the existence of a God. Some reduce a subject to such analytical refinement, as to leave it without any tangible matter at all—a mere bag of bones ; and others give you their sermons in a crude, undigested mass, and leave to their hearers the difficult work of analysis. Some sermons abound with biblical criticisms and varied readings, which show little beyond the ingenuity and learning of the preacher ; others are made up of anecdotes, fragments of Christian experience, and scraps of poetry, which show as little taste as judgment. Some preachers shout as though ministerial effect depended on the strength of the lungs ; others are very dreamy and quiet, and make up in length what they lack in depth. Some are as clear and cold as a Canadian frosty night ; others are as dark and impenetrable as a Russian winter

fog. Although these excrescences are occasionally found, yet the body of the Methodist ministry stands second to none in the simplicity of its constitution, the faithfulness of its discharge, the energy of its operations, or the majesty of its results.

At the Conference held in London in 1763, the following directions were given to the preachers respecting the method, the manner, and the subject of their preaching :—

“I. The method. They were—1. To invite. 2. To convince. 3. To offer Christ. 4. To build up, and to do this *in some measure in every sermon.*

“II. The manner. 1. To begin and end precisely at the time. 2. To suit their subjects to their audience, and to choose the plainest texts they could. 3. To be serious, weighty, and solemn, in their whole deportment before the congregations; and to tell each other if they observed any deviation from these rules.

“III. The subject. 1. To preach Christ in all his offices, and to declare his law, as well as his Gospel, to believers and unbelievers. 2. To insist upon practical religion in general, and upon relative duties in particular. 3. To preach against Sabbath-breaking, dram-drinking, evil speaking, unprofitable conversation, lightness, gaiety, or expensiveness of apparel, and contracting debts without sufficient care to discharge them. In a word, to preach against all kinds of vice, and to call the people to general repentance, in order to prevent a general visitation; for national sins call aloud for national judgments.”

Eighty-six years have elapsed since these curt, but pithy, directions were entered upon the Connexional records; and, though time has introduced many new elements into the ministry of Methodism, adapted to the many improvements in the social state, yet they are as applicable to the times in which we live, as those in which they were originally written.

The author is of opinion that the distinguishing doctrines of Methodism do not, in the present day, stand out in that prominent relief which they did prior to the death of Mr. Wesley. It is true that faith, which is the key-stone in the instrumental arch of Christianity, is occasionally brought

before our people, but generally in so vague and indeterminate a manner, as to be totally useless for all practical purposes. In the perorations of our pulpit discourses, congregations are often called upon to believe ; but, although no exhortation is more frequent, it is oft, like a spectre, impalpable to the touch. A hand-book of faith, adapted to the ordinary standards of comprehension, and varied by every form of familiar illustration which it is capable of receiving, is still a desideratum ; and the man who possesses the competence for such an important, though difficult, undertaking, and would lay that competence under contribution for such an object, would deserve the everlasting benediction of his race.

On the subject of faith much darkness and error exist. The *principle* and the *act* are frequently confounded. Faith and believing are sometimes indifferently used by the sacred writers ; and, therefore, whenever the term faith is employed, we have to determine by the connection in which it stands, whether the principle or the act is to be understood. Believing is the act of faith, just as seeing is the act of sight. We have eyes, but we may close them if we please, and so defeat the purposes for which they were given. And although we may be blessed with moral vision, yet even that capability is held in connection with a power (a power which, alas ! is too commonly exercised) of closing the eyes of the soul, and, by consequence, of shutting out the light of salvation, so that infidelity is less negative than positive in its character. Sometimes abstract truths are rendered more clear by plain illustrations. Believing, *i.e.*, the act of faith, may be said to rise in a graduated scale, thus : the first degree is persuasion ; the second, conviction ; the third, trust ; and the fourth, assurance, at which point of the scale pardon is communicated.

Then follow, in an upward ratio, first peace, then adoption, then joy, and onward until the meetness for glory is acquired. This may receive a further illustration, by comparing its gradations of exercise to a man ascending an eminence. The first step in advance gains upon the summit, but it requires a succession of steps before the summit is gained ; so it is in believing. The lowest degree of its exercise is a step towards justification ; but until the point of assurance is gained, the work is incomplete. Many seekers of salvation transpose the order of things in the economy of salvation, and look for the fruits or evidences of faith the instant they make the experiment, which is somewhat like looking for the harvest as soon as the seed is cast into the ground, or for the fruit the instant the tree is planted. Our faith has to be tested, tried, proved. We have to show whether we can trust where we cannot trace. Our faith must not only take hold, but keep hold, of the great Gospel sacrifice. Believing is a continuous act ; like Jacob's ladder, its foot is placed on the earth, but its top reaches to the throne of God.

The author makes these remarks with the fullest conviction, that believing is the *sole* instrument in the initial salvation of the sinner ; that sinners are reconciled to God by a simple act of trust in the Atonement, without any reference to works in any sense whatever. What he contends for is, that although believing may, when fairly brought into exercise, run up the scale as rapidly as the quicksilver in the thermometer on some sudden transition in the state of the atmosphere, yet that it must arrive at the point of trust, which constitutes assurance, before it can obtain the blessing of pardon, for which its exercise is applied. Such a belief is not a cold, dry, speculative sentimentalism, which is akin to infidelity ; but a warm, generous, actuating principle, which

embodies and generates all the best elements of practical Christianity. It is the faith that opens heaven ; the faith that revolutionises the soul ; the faith that carries the conquest and seizes on the spoil ; the faith that soars "on eagles' wings and scales the mount of heaven ;" the faith that—

"Laughs at impossibilities,
And cries it shall be done."

But who has this faith in the present day? That is a question much more easily asked than answered. Much of the faith that is current amongst us is spurious—is counterfeit. It is assent without confidence ; persuasion without reliance ; belief without trust. It sends not up the incense cloud to heaven ; it imparts no leavening influence ; it breathes no hallowed fire ; it rises not in the scale of spiritual elevation ; it is fixed and stationary, below the freezing point ; clear it may be, but cold as Zero. Where are the mighty men, the giants of former days ? those moving pillars of living fire ? those lofty spirits, whose upward glance attracted the smile of heaven ? those restless souls who wore out their bodies by the continual friction of agonising prayer ? Where are they ? Echo answers—Where ? Alas ! they are "'minished from the sons of men." Our race is deteriorated in moral strength and stature. Shadows supersede substances ; signs take the places of things, and well-constructed ceremonials have elbowed out the unpretending simplicity of devotional piety. It is true that professional credit is taken for growth in religion, and many stand high on the stilts of pretension ; but—

"Pigmies are pigmies still, though perch'd on Alps."

With all the parade of externalism ; the running to-and-fro, the activity and bustle, the loud and lengthy prayers,

the rich and talented sermons ; with all the improvements in the moral and religious machinery with which our age is so replete ; it cannot be concealed that our faith stands in word, not in deed ; in theory, not in application ; in professional statements, not in practical exhibitions.

How beautifully descriptive of the power and properties of saving faith are the words of our poet :—

“ Faith lends its realising light,
The clouds disperse, the shadows fly ;
The invisible appears in sight,
And God is seen by mortal eye.”

The twin doctrines of the new birth and the witness of the Spirit appear in our pulpits with as little prominence as that to which their experimental application is instrumentally ascribed ; namely, faith. In the early days of our Connexional history, pastoral questions on these fundamental points were much more close and searching than at present. The questions then put to members of our classes, irrespective of their social position, were something like the following :—“ Are your sins pardoned ? Are you born again ? Have you the abiding witness of the Spirit ? ” And these questions were expected to be answered, not in vague generalities, but with categorical definiteness. The distinction between a *son* and a *servant* was then clearly defined ; but these distinctions are now to a lamentable extent confounded. What was then the rule is now the exception ; and inferences are substituted for direct evidences as to the internal state of our people generally.

On the subject of the witness of the Spirit, Mr. Wesley was extremely tenacious. In a sermon which he preached at Newry, in 1767, on Rom. viii. 16, in explanation and defence of this doctrine,—a doctrine which is held by the Methodists in contradistinction from all Congregational

Churches,—he observes : “It more immediately concerns the Methodists so-called clearly to understand, explain, and defend this doctrine ; because it is one grand part of the testimony which God has given them to bear to all mankind. It is by his peculiar blessing upon them, in searching the Scriptures, confirmed by the experience of his children, that this great evangelical truth has been recovered, which had been for many years well nigh lost and forgotten.”

The author is aware that the doctrine of adoption into the family of God, witnessed to the believer's heart by the direct testimony of the Holy Spirit, has been stigmatised by the world as the mere dream of visionaries and fanatics. We have been tauntingly asked, by the adversaries of inwrought and inruling religion, how the work of conversion can be known ? how the pardon of sins can be ascertained ? It is readily admitted, that, by the unbelieving world, these experimental realities cannot be ascertained, and for a plain reason,—a reason given by the Holy Ghost, and, therefore, entitled to consideration : “The natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God ; they are foolishness to him.” But, why ? Simply because they are spiritually discerned, and he has no spiritual discernment. You may just as well, therefore, attempt to describe colours to a blind man, or sounds to one who is deaf, as to describe inward religion to those who are strangers to its power and influence. Grace must be felt to be understood, in its power, operation, and tendencies ; otherwise the natural man, on looking at the question, will naturally fall back on the exclamation of Nicodemus, “How can these things be ?”

The consecutive doctrines of justification and sanctification are, like the other distinguishing doctrines of our community, far less frequently brought before our people

than they ought to be. We seldom hear a sermon on either of these doctrines. They appear to have been virtually placed under the ban of repudiation ; or, that the standard of Christian experience had been lowered, and, therefore, the necessity for their practical exhibition had either ceased to exist, or had been considerably narrowed. We cannot raise the standard of religion, either experimental or practical, too high. The more prominently its great discriminating features are brought out, the more stable become the safeguards of our public and private security.

We can only draw one of two inferences : either that the doctrines are not experienced in their saving power and influence ; or else the distinctions between them are not sufficiently understood. Dr. Bennett has given to the world a number of instances, in which they are clearly distinguishable from each other :—

“ Justification and sanctification agree in the following points :—

“ They are both essential to our salvation from the state into which we are fallen, and from the dangers to which we are exposed.

“ Both are sovereign favours bestowed on us by the God of salvation.

“ Both came to us through the redemption that is in Christ.

“ In both the operation of the Holy Spirit applies the work of Christ.

“ Both are designed to honour the law, and government, and grace of God.

“ Both are, therefore, enjoyed by all believers, and by believers only. But the two blessings differ in various ways.

“ Justification is specially related to the rectitude of God's government ; sanctification relates to the holiness of God's nature.

“ Justification is an act ; sanctification is a process.

“ Justification is the sentence of the Father, as moral governor on the throne of grace ; sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit in the temple of the heart.

“ Justification changes our state ; sanctification is a change of our nature or character.

“ In justification we are pronounced righteous ; by sanctification we are made holy.

“ Justification is the acceptance of our person into God's favour ; sanctification is the renewal of our heart into God's image.

"Justification, therefore, is a forensic term, expressive of God's jurisdiction over us; sanctification is catharistic, expressing God's moral influence over us.

"In justification the guilt of sin is remitted; in sanctification its deilement is cleansed.

"Justification gives a title to heaven; sanctification a fitness for it.

"Justification is by union to Christ, as the law's fulfiller; sanctification, by union to him as the purifier.

"Justification comes by uniting us to Christ as our legal head; sanctification, by uniting us to him as our vital head.

"Justification is by faith only on our part; sanctification is by many means, chiefly the Word and prayer, but also by ordinances and afflictions, under the influence of the Spirit.

"Justification is complete as soon as we believe; sanctification then commences amid great imperfections.

"Justification may be referred to a known definite time; sanctification is spread over the whole life.

"In justification there is no difference among believers; in sanctification there are great varieties.

"Justification comes first as the root; sanctification follows as the fruit.

"Justification, therefore, may be known by sanctification.

"Justification pronounces our title to the enjoyment of heaven; sanctification is given to fulfil the sentence." *

Why, it may be asked, do the labours of the pulpit produce so little effect upon the masses who attend the public ministry of the Gospel? Why is it that a formal profession of Christianity is accepted, throughout the length and breadth of the land, as a substitute for the renovation of the heart and the fruits of the Spirit of God? Why is it that speculative infidelity is so rife and rampant in our thickly-populated districts, and so much to be deplored in its practical

* The distinction between a justified and a sanctified state may be shown by a simple illustration. Fill two decanters with water, the one from a pure spring, and the other from a running brook, whose waters have been rendered turbid by a heavy fall of rain. In the morning the water in both decanters will appear equally clear, but on shaking them the difference will be immediately apparent; for, whilst the spring water will remain unaffected by the action of shaking, the other will instantly show its dregs.

exemplifications? Why is it that popular outbreaks so daringly threaten the safeguards of moral and social order? Much of this may be attributed to the loose and indeterminate manner in which the fundamental doctrines of Christianity are exhibited in our pulpit ministrations, and the absence of close personal application. If there were more clearness of description, and more earnestness of appeal; if the distinguishing doctrines of Christianity were more faithfully brought out, its duties and sanctions more clearly defined, and more practically enforced; if the symbols of the Divine glory were more frequently invoked; if there were more pathos and prayer effused and blent in pulpit exercises, then the apothegm, "like priest like people," instead of being used as a reproach, would be set up as the distinctive badge of ministerial glory.

If the great body of our preachers were men of highly-cultivated piety, uniformly devoted to the spirit of the work in which they are engaged, they would instrumentally effect a moral revolution within their respective spheres of action. The influence of their principles, practically developed, would leaven that part of the community on which their piety and zeal were brought to act, and the moral character of our congregations, and especially of our young members, would be far less liable to be affected by accident or impulse, than under the existing state of things.

On a *prima facie* view, it seems almost a libel on the ministerial character to give expression to hints which involve a suspicion of the spiritual integrity of those who minister between "the porch and the altar;" because the preacher of righteousness is supposed to be an impersonation of the Gospel in its broad requirements,—an embodiment of the active and passive graces of Christianity,—a living

exhibition of the power and influence of converting grace in its successive stages, from commencement to consummation.

A minister of religion is a beacon, a pilot, a guide. Though but a single item of the great community, he concentrates in his character a large amount of moral power and influence, and a still larger amount of moral responsibility. Every act he performs, every word he utters, is influential. He never moves without giving an impulse to some power, a vibration to some of the chords of life which bear upon the moral economy. He takes his place in the social circle ; every one takes his cue from him, he is the soul and centre of the party ; he utters a *bon mot*, it feeds the pleasurable vivacity of his hearers ; another and another follows, and though there may be nothing wrong in the subjects broached, yet the tendencies are all in the wrong direction. Associations are awakened and feelings excited, which, whilst they promote the natural levity of the mind, operate as a countercheck to emotions of an upward aspect and bearing ; and sometimes become the instruments of incalculable and irreparable mischief.* Most evils, says a practical writer, flatter in their rise, but their beginnings are dangerous, their growth imperceptible, and the evils they carry in their train lie concealed until their dominion is firmly established. “ The beginning of strife,” says Solomon, “ is as when one

* It is related of the Rev. James Hervey, one of the pious and excellent contemporaries of the Messrs. John and Charles Wesley, that, during the latter part of his ministry, he seldom appeared in company ; and, although frequently invited to grace by his presence the social circle, yet he uniformly declined. On one occasion, being requested by an intimate friend to assign a reason for his conduct, he made a reply which was alike honourable to his character both as a minister and a Christian : “ There are few families belonging to my congregation where the conversation turns upon the deep things of God. I hear much religious chit-chat, and but little of Christ ; and I have made up my mind never to go into any company where there is not room for my Master as well as for myself.”

letteth out water ; he knoweth not where it may end." It issues from a small chink, which might easily have been stopped, but, being neglected, it is widened by the current, until the bank is thrown down, and the flood left at liberty to deluge the plain. The talented author of "Mammon" has observed : "The most casual remark lives for ever in its effects ; every word has a moral history ; and hence it is that every idle word that men shall speak assumes a character so important as to become the subject of inquest at the Day of Judgment."

Social intercourse, when regulated by right principles and carried out by legitimate means, greatly contributes to promote the best ends and interests of life. It serves to strengthen the bonds by which mind is bound to kindred mind, to increase the cementing power of social unity ; and, when properly conducted, it receives and confers reciprocal advantages.

This is, however, what social intercourse should be—not what it is. Within the domain of Methodism, where the distinctions of caste are found, it has become fashionable with the upper classes of society to give their evening parties. It is true the preacher is usually invited to occupy the moderator's chair, and to give a tone to the party. But, instead of these select coteries being sources of useful information, or vehicles of spiritual edification, they too often diffuse a miasmatic influence, and poison all the purer springs of devotional piety. "I will not experimentalise upon my constitution," said the venerable and pious Rowland Hill, "in order to ascertain what quantity of poison it will bear without endangering my life. I will take no poison at all. I will not run the risk of breaking my leg, because I am told that in the neighbourhood resides an experienced bone-setter. I

will not place myself within the desolating influence of a putrid fever, because I am told that an infallible febrifuge has been discovered. I will endeavour to keep out of harm's way, because I have learnt the policy of the maxim, 'Prevention is better than cure.'" An inspired writer asks: "Can a man take fire into his bosom and his clothes not be burnt?" Would a man be likely to escape a plague who deliberately placed himself in the focus of the pestilential miasma? Would a man who was seeking the salvation of his soul, expect to find it in the carousals of obstreperous hilarity? Would the Levitical high priests have descended from their functional elevation and immediate intercourse with God, to participate in the frivolities of fashionable worldliness? Would Paul, or Peter, or the beloved John, have sought to grace the apostolic dignity, by joining in the levities of evening soirees? Would John Wesley, who was as covetous of time as a miser is of gold, have effected the moral revolution which he instrumentally achieved, if he had "whiled" away his evenings at private parties? These are questions which require no comment—they enforce their own appeal.

The author makes these remarks with the fact in mind, that these private soirees generally escape the censures not only of the world, but of the church. But so far from being the less dangerous on account of their falling so little under human censure, they are the more so on that very account. "If," as Andrew Fuller justly remarks, "we are guilty of anything which exposes us to the reproaches of those about us, such reproofs may assist the remonstrances of our consciences, and lead us to examine and correct our lives in the sight of God; but of those things of which the world acquit us, we shall be too much disposed to acquit ourselves."

A fashionable evening party, where the conversation is usually light and frivolous ; where popular music puts forth its vocal and instrumental charms ; where wit excites laughter, and laughter excites wit ; where the mind becomes less or more intoxicated by the vivacity and pleasure which the enchantment imparts to the scene, is not the most fitting place for a minister, who has to denounce in the pulpit what he tolerates in the drawing-room. "Ah ! sir," said Robert Hall to a friend, on leaving a party which had been distinguished by gaiety and brilliance, "I have again contributed to the loss of an evening, as to everything truly valuable ; go home with me, that we may spend at least one hour in a manner which becomes us."

A minister of religion should never lose sight of the awakening fact, that Christianity is not only a religion of truth and purity,—it is a religion of *honesty*. Men around us, whether religious or profane, will set up the ministers of the Gospel as standards, not only of doctrine, but of morals. The hackneyed proverb, which is applied to a large class of ministers, "Do as I say, and not as I do," is the standing reproach to the ministry in a Christian land. Congregations will be much more disposed to draw their conclusions of the moral integrity and purity of the ministerial character from what they *see* in the conduct of ministers, than from what they *hear* in their pulpit discourses. On this estimate the conduct of David, in one melancholy instance, is said to have given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme ; and acts of public or private dereliction in temple functionaries operate now precisely as they did in David's day. Whatever of an adverse character is done by a minister in holy things, is ascribed not so much to his private as to his official character ; and hence un-Christian conduct

bears false witness for God, and gives a false representation of his Gospel to the world.

“ Oh ! ” said a pious divine, when contemplating, amid the extensive wreck of public morals, the little conformity with Christian principle he found among the standard-bearers of the Cross, “ how little of pure Christianity is retained. Either we are not Christians, or Christianity is not true ! ” Need it be remarked, that, even among the ministers of our solemnities, there is too much levity and too little devotional feeling ; too much worldly conformity and too little abstraction of mind and manners ; too much external show and pretension and too little of the inwrought power of transforming godliness ; too much regard paid to mere circumstantialia and too little to the inward renovation of the heart. It is true these things are admitted and deplored ; but they are, nevertheless, tolerated and practised.*

If, as is observed by a distinguished living divine, every individual infected by a moral disease is surrounded by an atmosphere combining the principal elements of that disease, and that every person, not previously infected, who comes in contact with that infected atmosphere, inhales its properties, and becomes less or more affected by the influence it has upon

* The Rev. James Hervey, to whom reference was made in a preceding note, had a peculiar tact in conveying rebuke, and of turning the subject of that rebuke into a means of instructive advantage. On one occasion, during the early part of his public life, he was invited to meet a select party at tea. After tea, cards were introduced, and Mr. Hervey was politely asked whether he had any objection to join in that amusement. On his replying in the negative, the card-table was duly placed, the cards brought out, and the party about to commence the game. At this moment Mr. Hervey rose, and, with great solemnity of manner, said, “ Let us first ask a blessing.” “ Oh ! sir,” said one of the party, “ we never ask a blessing upon cards.” “ Don’t you ? ” rejoined the minister of God ; “ then I dare not play. *I cannot join in any amusement upon which I cannot ask the blessing of God !* ” It is needless to add that the cards were put aside. The remote effect has to be told in another day.

his moral system ; then we see clearly how the deadly miasma is communicated. A number of individuals in a party of this kind are under a morbid influence ; the contagion is caught by all who come in contact with them. It spreads, increases, prevails, until all are contaminated ; and the only difference between them is, not that which is observable between sickness and health, but that which is perceptible between the different stages of the same disease ; and, therefore, whatever measure of hallowed feeling a man takes with him into a social party of this kind, it will be a miracle if he takes any away. It will all be absorbed.

CHAPTER IV.

RESPONSIBILITY OF THE MINISTERIAL OFFICE—ST. PAUL'S PREACHING AND WRITINGS—BUNYAN'S VIEW OF THE MINISTRY—HIS OWN METHOD OF PREACHING—BAXTER'S PREACHING—REFLECTIONS ON POPULAR PREACHING—BAXTER'S OPINION OF PREACHING GENERALLY.

As the Christian minister is invested with the highest official dignity that can possibly be conferred upon a human being, it is expected that the character and bearings of a preacher of the Gospel should comport, in all respects, with the distinguished office which he sustains, and the responsible results which that office involves. The responsibility which he incurs is public as well as private. He embodies and exerts an influence which must operate for good or evil throughout the circle of which he is the centre ; and where so much is at stake,— the gain so great, the loss so irreparable,—it becomes him to act with the greatest circumspection. He is to live and act in vital union with Christ ; to be one with him in spirit, motive, design, interest, and aim. He is broadly and unequivocally to demonstrate, in his conduct, the power and purity of the Gospel of the grace of God ; and practically to illustrate, in all the manifestations of his life, the commanding verity and operative influence of regenerative godliness. His motives are to be ingenuous and unalloyed, his conduct open and unambiguous, and his whole life not only above guilt, but above suspicion. He is to abjure the world, in its spirit, principles, and end ; to have no communion with its disciples, no identity with its interests, no appetite for its amusements, and no sympathy with its aims ; but to pursue a

retired and separate walk, and towards its acknowledged votaries to maintain a distant and studied reserve. He is expected to show in his forehead the white stone bearing the mystical inscription, as the seal of his adoption, and to exhibit in full attestation and relief the substantial evidences of inwrought and inruling transformation. Having placed on record a solemn pledge to consecrate his entire life to God, in motive, manner, means, and end, he can only redeem that pledge by devoting himself to his work without truce, or compromise, or reservation.

Such a minister will never want incentives to labour, nor a field in which that labour may be profitably employed. The salvation of souls is his *prima, media, ultima*—his polar star ; and from this point of convergence, all the rays of his spiritual character are diffused around their common centre.

There is something exceedingly solemn and affecting in the ministerial charge given by Paul to Timothy (2 Tim. iv. 1, *et seq.*), especially when we consider the circumstances under which it was delivered. The Apostle, at that time a prisoner under Nero, was standing on the confines of both worlds : the one receding from sight, the other appearing in full view ; and with all the weight of motive drawn from such a presentment, regardless of his own death, or the circumstances of torture by which it might be accompanied, he appears to have but one object of solicitude, and that is the spread of the Gospel of Jesus : “ I charge thee, therefore, before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and dead at his appearing, and his kingdom, preach the word ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and doctrine. Watch thou in all things, endure affliction, do the work of an evangelist, give full proof of thy ministry.”

The Apostle, like a wise and skilful minister of Jesus Christ, adopted a great variety of method, both in his preaching and writings, with the view more effectually to accomplish the objects of his important and difficult mission. Sometimes he hurled the thunders of Divine vengeance, to rouse those whom he found in the treacherous calm of spiritual death ; at others, he employed the mild persuasives of the Gospel, to encourage and lead onward the faint and feeble-minded. Sometimes he led his hearers to Sinai's trembling mount, and showed them the unmitigated penalties of a broken law ; at others, he led them to Calvary's suffering summit, and pointed them to the Lamb of God, that taketh away the sin of the world. Sometimes he laid open the caverns of misery and despair, to intimidate the bold and adventurous votaries of sin ; at others, he unveiled the glories of heaven, to ravish the hearts and inflame the love of the sanctified disciples of Jesus. On some occasions his learning and eloquence burst forth with such resistless power as to astonish and confound the philosophers of Greece and Rome ; on others, the learning of the scholar was merged in the simplicity of the Christian, and he left the feet of Gamaliel to sit at the feet of Christ. Indeed, he employed every diversity of mode and subject, so as to meet every variety of case, that he might become "all things to all men ;"—not for his own aggrandisement, but for the glory of God.

With what admirable skill he adapts his varied instructions to an almost infinite diversity of persons, occasions, and circumstances : to their strength or feebleness ; their progress or decay ; their mistaken or wilful abuses ; their different capacities, advantages, or disadvantages. With what effect does he deal out mildness or vehemence, tenderness or sharpness, affection or reproof ; so that, in the particular

administration of the duties of his office, he might approve himself "a workman that needed not to be ashamed,"—a faithful steward of the mysteries of God ; thereby showing, that as much wisdom was required in building the spiritual edifice under the Christian dispensation, as was imparted to Bezaleel and Aholiab for the construction of the tabernacle under the Levitical economy. Were this model faithfully followed, the Gospel would be far more successful in its moral conquests, and the responsibilities of its ministers would be far less trembling than they are under the present state of things.

The responsibility of the ministerial office will appear with commanding force and clearness, if we rightly estimate the important results which are connected with, and dependent upon, the discharge of its functional duties. It should constantly be borne in mind by every minister of the Gospel, that in the great and eventful day, when acts and motives will be weighed in the balances of the sanctuary, and when the destinies of futurity will be irreversibly fixed and determined, an inquiry will be instituted into every man's work, and a comparison made between the talents which each minister has received and the returns he has yielded ; and that such inquiry will go to the extent of demanding an account of the use and improvement of every talent. The minister who received ten talents will have to account for the whole ten ; the minister who received five will have to account for five ; he who received two will have to account for two ; and he who received one will have to account for one : so that it will be no answer to the question, by a minister, that he has made *some* improvement, unless his improvement shall have been correspondent with the talents he has received, both in quality and amount.

It should never be forgotten that every Gospel minister is a *steward*, and not a *proprietor*, of the gifts and graces with which he is endowed ; and, therefore, the promotion of the purposes of God's mercy and grace is the trust and condition on which those powers are committed to him. Whatever other use he may make of them will stand him in no stead, or be admitted as any proof of his fidelity, in the day of reckoning. He may cultivate his understanding by learning, and extend his researches through all the subjects of human inquiry ; but if his object be his own gratification, that is not serving God, but himself. So again, his talent may be of the highest order, and exercised with the nicest skill ; but if it be made a stepping-stone to the acquirement of popularity, or power, or place, the object and means will both be denounced by the Judge of the whole earth.

Bunyan, in his account of his call to the ministry, feelingly refers to the deep exercises and breathings of his soul for the salvation of his fellow-men. "In my preaching I have often really been in pain, and have, as it were, travailed to bring forth children to God ; neither could I be satisfied unless some fruit did appear in my work. If I were fruitless, it mattered not who commended me ; but, if I were fruitful, I cared not who did condemn. If any of those who were awakened under my ministry did, after that, fall back (as sometimes too many did), I can truly say their loss hath been more to me than if my own children, begotten of my own body, had been going to the grave. I think, verily, I may speak it without any offence to the Lord, nothing has gone so near me as that, unless it was the fear of the loss of the salvation of my own soul. I have counted as if I had goodly buildings and lordships in those places where my children were born. My heart has been so wrapped up in

the glory of this excellent work, that I counted myself more blessed and honoured of God by this than if he had made me emperor of the Christian world, or the lord of all the glory of the earth without it. O! these words:—‘He that converteth a sinner from the error of his ways doth save a soul from death. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life; and he that winneth souls is wise. They that be wise shall shine as the brightness of the firmament, and they that turn many to righteousness as the stars for ever and ever. For what is our hope, our joy, our crown of rejoicing? Are not ye even in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at his coming? For ye are our glory and joy!’ These, I say, with many others of a like nature, have been great refreshments to me.”

The divine Baxter was evidently actuated by a kindred spirit in the prosecution of the solemn and responsible objects which his ministry contemplated:—

“I preached, as never sure to preach again,
And as a dying man to dying men!”

One of his recent biographers* has given to the world a vivid account of his style of preaching, and thence drawn some important reflections on a style of preaching in which many young men of education indulge:—“He preached Christ crucified in a crucified style, without ever diverting his hearers by extravagance, or offending them by coarseness. He never ranged over poetical fields to cull flowers for his sermons. All his flowers, and many of them are of the loveliest and freshest hues, grew out of his subject; and there he let them stand, because they were either medicinal or nourishing to his hearers, as well as beautiful to their sight. He preached as feeling that the truths of God were too great and too glorious in themselves to be covered up

* The Rev. T. W. Jenkyn, D.D., President of Coward College.

with the little trappings of human adornments. He would as soon have thought of hanging the rainbow with corals, as of dressing the Cross with tinsel. His eloquence consisted in fit thoughts, and not in rounded sentences. Consummate and ready dialectician as he was, he very rarely or never introduced metaphysics into his sermons. Sometimes, indeed, as has been recorded, he would say something profound or abstruse, just to convince his hearers that his plain preaching, and his simple style, were not to be traced either to a feeble intellect, or to a superficial knowledge ; still he was never a metaphysical essayist in the pulpit ; he never preached a sermon to display his scholastic learning, or his powers of logic ; but his aim was ever to win souls to Christ."

"His sermons are all distinguished for directness of purpose and singleness of aim. He neither preached about his hearers, nor at them, but to them. All his sermons have a given and intelligible aim, which stood directly and prominently before his eye, and that was the heart or the conscience. He aimed at producing impression, and producing it while he was yet speaking : he, therefore, never sent his hearers home to decide, but always insisted on 'Now or never.' In preaching, his heart burnt within him ; and, while he was speaking, a live coal from the altar fired his sermon with seraphic fervour. Into his pulpit he brought all the energies and sympathies of his entire nature. He had a large mind, an acute intellect, a melting heart, a holy soul, a kindling eye, and a 'moving voice ;' and he called on all that was within him to aid him in his preaching. Being deeply earnest himself, he wished his hearers to be deeply earnest also. Himself being a burning light, he wished to flash the hallowed fire into the hearts of others. He seems never to have studied action or the 'start theatric.' The only teacher that gave him lessons in action and attitude was feeling,—real, genuine, holy feeling ; and this taught him how to look, how to move, and how to speak. In preaching, as well as in everything religious, he believed, with Paul, that 'it is good to be always zealously affected ;' and, consequently, that earnest, fervid preaching is truly apostolic."

On this most important, but nearly exploded, mode of preaching, Mr. Baxter's biographer makes the following awakening reflections :—

“Would God that there had been, in the Church of Christ, a real, uninterrupted succession in the fervour of apostolic preaching ; and that the mantle of apostolic Elijahs had been taken up by succeeding Elishas, and by men like Apollos, ‘an eloquent man, and mighty in the Scriptures, who, being fervent in spirit, spake and taught diligently the things of the Lord.’ If fine and elegant sermons are tolerable at all, it is in the press only, when they are to be read as discussions of a subject, and read either as an intellectual exercise, or as a discipline of conscience. In the pulpit splendid sermons are splendid sins. They dazzle, and amuse, and astonish, like brilliant fire-works ; but they throw daylight on no subject. They draw attention to the preacher instead of to the Gospel. The splendid preacher, like the pyrotechnist, calculates on a dark night among his attendants ; and, amid the coruscations of the pulpit, his skill and his art are admired and applauded ; but Christ is not glorified. If angels weep, and devils mock, it is at the pulpit door of a splendid preacher. The modern mode of preaching is more like Joseph’s coat of many colours, than like Elijah’s mantle which raised the dead ; it has never descended from a chariot of fire, and is so flimsy that it gives neither heat nor warmth even to the preacher himself.”

Were all pulpit ministrations performed after the manner and in the spirit of Baxter, the vineyard of the Lord would appear in all the freshness of vernal beauty, instead of that wintry, withering aspect which it too commonly presents. A minister who is unfaithful to the high and responsible trusts of his commission will appear in the presence of God in garments saturated with the blood of lost souls, and will be assailed, on every hand, by cries of “Vengeance ! vengeance !” He will have many more sins to answer for than his own separately considered. He is a traitor to God ; a traitor to his people ; and a traitor to himself. We speak not now of those “blind guides” and “dumb dogs,” who never knew the truth of religion in its experimental and renovating influence ; but of those preachers who, though they have felt the powers of the world to come, have, nevertheless, allowed themselves to be warped by the seductions of a perilous popularity ; and thus have “sacrificed to their own net, and burnt incense to their own drag.”

Every consideration with which the ministerial office is surrounded invests it with a character overwhelmingly momentous. On the faithful or unfaithful discharge of its responsible functions the destinies of futurity are fearfully suspended; and the final consignment to heaven or to hell of multitudes will greatly depend upon the manner in which the truths of the Gospel have been preached and enforced.

Baxter, in his "Reformed Pastor," has some stirring thoughts on a vigorous and energetic style of preaching, in contradistinction to that heartless, soulless, Christless manner which prevailed in his day; and which is the type of a mode that extensively prevails in the present day:—"How few ministers do preach with all their might? or speak about everlasting joy or torment in such a manner as to make men believe that they are in good sadness. It would make a man's heart ache to see a company of dead and drowsy sinners sit under a minister, and not have a word that is like to quicken or awaken them. To think with ourselves, *O, if these sinners were but convinced and awakened, they might yet be converted and live!* And alas! we speak so drowsily or gently that sleepy sinners cannot hear. The blow falls so light that hard-hearted persons cannot feel it. Most ministers will not so much as put out their voice and stir up themselves to an earnest utterance. But if they do speak out loud and earnestly, how few do answer it with earnestness of matter? and then the voice doth but little good; the people will take it for mere bawling, when the matter doth not correspond. It would grieve me to hear what excellent doctrine some ministers have in hand, and let it die in their hands for want of close and lively application. What fit matter they have for convincing sinners, and how little they make of it, and

what a deal of good it might do if it were sent home ; and yet they cannot or will not do it. Oh, sirs ! how plain, how close, and earnestly should we deliver a message of such a nature as ours is ! When the everlasting life or death of men is concerned in it, methinks we are nowhere so wanting as in this seriousness. There is nothing more unsuitable to such a business than to be slight and dull. What ! speak coldly for God ! and for men's salvation ! Can we believe that our people must be converted or condemned, and yet can we speak in a drowsy tone ? In the name of God, brethren, labour to awaken your hearts before you come ; and when you are in the work, that you may be fit to awaken the hearts of sinners, remember that they must be awakened or damned ! and a sleepy preacher will hardly awake them."

CHAPTER V.

ARCHBISHOP WILLIAMS' REFLECTIONS—PIETY THE CHIEF REQUISITE FOR THE MINISTRY—TREATMENT OF LOCAL PREACHERS BY THE CONFERENCE—OBJECTS OF THE LOCAL MINISTRY—FEELING NOT TO BE SUBSTITUTED FOR FAITH—BISHOP CORRY'S PLAN IN INDIA—GROUNDS OF ENCOURAGEMENT—FALLACY OF UTILITARIAN SCHEMES—MAN'S NATURAL STATE DESCRIBED, AND THE OPPOSITION OFFERED BY THAT STATE TO THE OPERATION OF THE MINISTRY.

It is recorded of Archbishop Williams, a pious and distinguished prelate, that, shortly before his removal from the world, he made the following important statement :—"I have passed through many more places of honour and trust, both in Church and State, during the last seventy years, than any man of my order in England ; yet, were I but assured, that, by my preaching, I had but converted one soul to God, I should draw more spiritual joy from that assurance than from all the honours and offices which have been bestowed upon me." This statement is of more than ordinary value, because it is the testimony of a man of distinguished learning and exalted piety ; and made at a time when he was standing on the threshold of the grave, with the reflex and the prospective standing out, in full review, before his spiritual vision.

There can be little security for the effective discharge of ministerial functions given by men whose hearts are not rightly affected by a proper estimate of the sanctions under which they act, or an adequate sense of the objects which their office contemplates. Every ministerial act has a

bearing upon the destinies of eternity. The important trusts and issues which the Gospel embodies ; the fearful obligations it creates ; the responsible duties it imposes ; and the momentous results it involves, invest it with a character which cannot be viewed otherwise than with solemnity and awe.

As a simple matter of reference to eternity, it is of little consequence whether the pious Local Preacher stands high or low in the social circle ; whether his mind is capacious or confined ; whether his talents are many or few. At the general inquest, decisions will apply to actions, respective of their quality, rather than their quantity. Public or private acts will not be investigated abstractedly, but in connection with their respective motives. On this estimate the widow's mite was deemed a nobler contribution to the treasury of God, than the large sums which were thrown in by wealthy contributors. Had a judgment, in that instance, been formed on the acts, relatively considered, it would have stood in direct opposition to that pronounced by the Saviour ; but with Christ all transactions are tested by the motives from which they spring.

The late pious and excellent vicar of Olney has a remark which has been regarded as a ministerial axiom :—"None but he who made the world can make a minister of the Gospel." This position he illustrates thus :—"If a young man has capacity, culture and application may make him a scholar, a philosopher, or an orator ; but a true minister must have certain principles, feelings, and aims, which no industry or endeavours of men can either acquire or communicate ; they must be given from above, or they cannot be received."

A Local Preacher may occupy an obscure corner of the world ; may have little private intercourse with his

fellow-men ; may have to struggle through life with adverse circumstances ; and yet he may stand closely allied to that noble band, of whom it was said, "the world was not worthy." His chamber is the place of audience with God. It is in familiar but hallowed communion with the Father, through the Son, by the Holy Ghost, that he derives his successive supplies of grace to perform, and joy to stimulate and crown, his labours. His studies are those of the heart rather than those of the head. Every subject he takes up is viewed through the mirror of truth. He aims at divine conquest rather than human distinction. Prayer is the ladder by which he ascends to heaven, and praise is the fragrant incense of a grateful heart.

I venerate the man,
Whate'er his station in this babbling world,
Who preaches not himself, but Christ ; and makes
The Cross the burden of his theme.

No class of men occupying a place in the philanthropic world are more really disinterested than those who compose the Lay Pastorate of Methodism. Employed throughout the week in secular avocations, they are no charge to the people among whom they labour. Their services are perfectly gratuitous, and their office does not relieve them from the pecuniary demands necessary to keep up the supplies for the public exchequer. Indeed the private resources of those who have the ability are frequently laid under contribution to meet expenses, necessarily incurred, in attending distant appointments, no circuit funds being available for that purpose ; so that, calculating the simple question of abstract character, as between the members of the Itinerant and Local Ministry, the sum-total is greatly in favour of the latter ; that is, supposing the calculation to be made on equal numbers of both branches of the executive.

In making this remark, the author has not been actuated by invidious feeling. During the somewhat long period he has had the honour of a place on the Local Preachers' plan, it has been his privilege to enjoy intercourse with many members of the upper department of the Methodist Ministry, and to be favoured with their counsel and instruction. But he has, nevertheless, felt, in common with many others, that although the Local Preachers constitute the arterial strength of the Connexion, yet their social condition calls forth little inquiry ; their sorrows excite little sympathy ; their complaints obtain little redress ; their labours evoke little gratitude ; their piety commands little favour ; their poverty awakens little commiseration ; their character, standing, age, usefulness, do not obtain that consideration to which their position in the body gives them a legitimate claim. The author cannot allow one matter to pass without notice. As an incalculable amount of our Connexional prosperity has, confessedly, resulted from the labours of the Lay Pastorate, it might have been expected that the Conference, at its annual sittings, from time to time, would have recorded in its "Minutes" some recognition of the immense aid continuously derived from that branch of its administration ; and that, among the numerous "votes of thanks" to the many lay and clerical functionaries employed in the different working departments of the body, the Local Preachers would not have been overlooked ; but it has always been a matter of surprise to the author that their labours should have uniformly been passed over *sub silentio*, as though they did not form an integral part of the Connexion, or that their labours were unentitled to public approval.

There is what poets have termed the *sublimity of silence* ; a lofty sentimentalism, which breathes itself forth in

unspoken but intelligible language ; such as that which was successfully employed by Amynias before the Athenian judges, when the mere exhibition of the stump of his arm, which he had lost at the battle of Salamis, procured the immediate pardon of his brother, Æschylus, the celebrated tragedian and poet. But there is the converse of this—the *indignity of silence* ; the exponent of a feeling diametrically at variance with the noble and generous spirit of our common Christianity. Whether the silence of Conference may be placed in either of these catagories, or whether it occupies a position somewhere between them, is a question which must be left to men to decide for themselves. The author deplores the fact for this reason, and only for this reason, that it has a tendency to produce feelings of mutual repulsion, instead of mutual attraction ; and to diminish, if not to extinguish, those reciprocal interchanges of fraternal affection, which would give to the Conference a disposable power that nothing could possibly withstand.

Though the ministry of mercy contemplates a number of serial objects, graduating on an ascending scale, yet they are all subsidiary to the crowning end of life ; namely, the soul's glorification in heaven. The means to secure these successive objects it is the business of the Christian ministry, whether Itinerant or Local, to explain, enforce, and apply. Let us see how this point is made out. A profligate enters the sanctuary of God ; a faithful Boanerges is proclaiming the terrors of the Lord ; the truth seizes the sinner's conscience with unanswerable conviction ; his alarm is excited ; he quails under the wrath of God, and the plaintive wail instinctively escapes him, "What must I do to be saved ?" Here is the beginning of a work of grace. He leaves the chapel ; endeavours to shake off his convictions, but his

endeavours are vain—he has been seized with the irrelaxative grasp of an outraged law. He repeats his visit to the sanctuary ; he hears of the dying love of Jesus, and hope springs up in his soul ; he adopts the recommendatory instruction of the preacher ; goes believingly to the fountain of blood, as did the blind man to the pool of Siloam ; gets the lintels of his heart sprinkled ; the chains of his vassalage fall off, and he at once steps into the liberty of the children of God. This may be taken as a general type of the process by which Gospel conquests are achieved. The outward aspects of different cases may exhibit some circumstantial variation ; but, substantially, all pass from nature to grace, and from grace to glory, by the same road. Every sermon should embody a condensed epitome of Christianity ; show the respective offices of the Law and the Gospel in their several relations and dependencies, and be sent home to the conscience by earnest and affectionate appeals.

Too much caution cannot be employed by Local Preachers in guarding our people against the substitution of feeling for faith, an error which has gained extensively among persons who are not very clear in their notions of constructive Christianity. Frequently excitements and impulses are mistaken for the operations of the Spirit of God, especially by persons of a warm and sanguine temperament. Easily elated and as easily depressed, their religion is, to a great extent, dependant on frames and feelings, which are not always to be taken as a safe standard by which to measure it in its power and extent. Christianity draws its inferences of religious principle not from what appears under any sudden excitement, but by the uniform tenor of a man's life. On mere constitutional grounds, a man of real piety may be greatly depressed in feeling, without being chargeable with the

commission of sin, or any dereliction of duty ; and, on the other hand, a man whose religion has few of the elements of true piety in its composition, may be greatly excited under the ministry of a fervid or impassioned preacher, without receiving any increase of vital godliness, and sometimes without any religion at all ; so that to draw inferences from our own state, or from the state of others, by any particular set of feelings, is altogether unsound and un-Scriptural. Christianity does not depend for its existence or growth upon the flux or reflux of feeling, but is a life of faith upon the Son of God.

It not unfrequently happens that those persons whose feelings are the most easily excited, have the least upon which to fall back in seasons of trial. Their excitements seldom outlive the occasions which gave them birth ; like seed scattered on the rock, they only spring up to wither and die. Their constitutional feelings, having no spiritual stamina on which to feed, soon lose their unnatural warmth, and leave them in greater coldness than before. At the same time it must not be denied, that where there is much religion there will be much feeling. But there is an immense difference between that calm and dignified feeling which is generated and fed by the Spirit of God, and that which spends itself in noisy ebullitions. The one is like the sun, unvaried in the amount and quality of the light it diffuses ; the other is like the meteor's glare, which suddenly breaks in upon the midnight gloom, and then vanishes to make the surrounding darkness tenfold greater.

The preacher of the Gospel is sometimes dispirited, because he has seen little or no fruit of his labour.* But it

* The late Bishop Corry, when chaplain to the East India Company, adopted a plan of communicating instruction which practically illustrated

would be extremely improper to rush upon the conclusion, that his labours have been unproductive, because the visible results appear to bear no proportion to the labour employed. Great and everlasting good may have been done, although, for reasons best known to the Almighty, the agent may not have been permitted to know it. If all preachers were to be made acquainted with the saving effects of their instrumentality, it might call forth feelings which, for public and private reasons, it is important should be kept out of existence.

Although we cannot entertain views too humbling of our own insufficiency, yet there is a voluntary humility which is the offshoot of pride. Our encouragement, as preachers, should take hold, and keep hold, of the covenant grace of Jesus. What has human instrumentality, under the power of God, effected? Moses had very humbling views of his unfitness for the office of God's vicegerent, in the conducting of the Israelites from Egypt to Canaan; but the promise of Jehovah's direction and support at once silenced his

the saying of the wise man: "In the morning sow thy seed, and in the evening withhold not thine hand; for thou knowest not whether shall prosper, either this or that." Before the Scriptures were translated into the vernacular dialects of Continental India, he wrote on small slips of paper striking passages of the New Testament, in Hindostanee, and scattered them every morning from his own door. The doctor was subsequently removed to a distant part of India. Some twenty years afterwards he received a letter from a missionary at his former station, informing him that a native had come there in ill health, to see his friends and to die among them. He sought out the missionary who visited him, and who was astonished to find him well acquainted with the most important facts and narratives of Scripture; but that astonishment was greatly increased when he learnt from the dying man that he had never before conversed with a missionary, and had never seen a copy of the Scriptures. On inquiry how he had obtained his accurate knowledge of Christianity, the man put his hand behind his pillow and drew forth a bundle of these tattered slips of paper, which he had obtained in the manner described, and through the medium of which he had derived a saving acquaintance with eternal realities.

reasonings. He enters upon the work, and at every step his authority is acknowledged. He waves his rod, and the waters of the Red Sea instantly become walls of adamant. He smites the flinty rock, and immediately waters rush forth in flowing streams. Joshua issues a command, and nature obeys in the suspension of her general laws. Elisha smites the waters of Jordan with the mantle of Elijah, and they divide to afford a passage as on dry land. Though these are not examples for imitation, yet they show the honour that God puts on human agency, when that agency is exercised with a paramount aim to promote his glory.

It may be assumed, without fear of contradiction, that no country in the world, of equal extent and population, has such an amount of ministerial agency in constant operation as that in which it is our happiness to live. If the promotion of the cardinal objects of Christianity were in proportion to the amount and quality of the agency embarked, and the steadiness with which that agency is pursued, then the criminal statistics of Britain would be far less deplorable than they are shown to be by our public records, and the moral aspect would be more bright and encouraging. It has frequently excited the astonishment of the philanthropist, that, in this Christian land, where the Bible is accepted by all classes as the standard of moral action, the inmates of our prisons should bear such a large proportion to our aggregate population. Moral utilitarians have given to the world various solutions of this difficult problem. One has suggested that the world might be greatly improved by a new plan of social organisation; a second has proposed to cure the woes of our suffering humanity by the universal diffusion of human knowledge; a third has laid down a benevolent scheme of morals as a sovereign panacea for all

the ills that flesh is heir to ; and others, equally visionary and vain, swell the list of these speculative regenerators of mankind. But, alas ! for man, none of these schemes touch the core of the evil they profess to cure. They all assume false premises, and, consequently, lead to false conclusions. They proceed upon the hypothesis, that man possesses an independent power to regulate all the springs of the soul and control the passions and appetites at will ; and that a remedial scheme, once adopted, works out its own completion ;—a conclusion which needs not the adduction of argument to show its absurdity.

Look at the case of man, as he actually stands, without flattery and without disguise. With the powers and capabilities of an angel are strangely united the passions and appetites of a devil. With the highest acquirements of learning and social refinement, are associated habits the most irregular and demoralising, as though superior capabilities had only been given to afford superior capabilities for the refinements of sensuality. Had man remained innocent, there would have been nothing in his desires or gratifications that would have violated the law or opposed the will of God. But, as the case actually stands, it is far otherwise. With his desires for God's mercies, he mingles no desire for God himself ; and with the enjoyment of his numerous favours, he associates no remembrance of the God who bestows them. Thus his desires rise and terminate in himself, and the enjoyment of them is as much detached and separate from God, as though the belief of God had no place in his creed, and God himself had no place in creation. Nor is this only true of the grosser appetites of man's nature ; it is equally true of every appetite which has for its object something separate from God. For instance, there may be as little true piety in

the paths of literature as in the paths of sensuality. If it be true, that he only who doeth the will of God endureth for ever, then the philosopher may be as little connected with God as the sensualist. "Don't talk to me," says Burke, "of the religion of a merchant : his gold is his god ; his desk his altar ; his ledger his Bible ; his exchange his church ; and the only being in whom he has any faith is his banker."

In preaching, there is comparatively little difficulty in gaining access to the mind through the intellectual perceptions, and of obtaining its ready concessions to the clear convictions of sound reasoning on Scripture verities. The infidelity which so extensively prevails, and which is so deaf to calls of duty, is less speculative than practical ; it is less the infidelity of the head than of the heart—a heart that will not adopt in practice what it admits in theory. The understanding allows its moral obligations, but the heart is hardened. Though sin is *seen*, it is not *felt* ; and holiness, though understood theoretically, finds no corresponding emotions in the heart, either with respect to its nature or its enjoyment. The reason is no secret. Man cherishes a disrelish for holiness and the means which lead to it. His heart, sensitive to its own rights, interests, and pleasures, is cold and torpid towards God. Motive will not act upon it ; persuasion has no force ; because, to use the solemn language of Scripture, it is "dead in trespasses and in sins."

We need more of that preaching which carries direct appeals to the conscience and heart,—which, by moving, melting sympathies, draws upon sympathies of a kindred nature. Baxter's advice on reproving sin, if followed, is admirably calculated to gain access in the right quarter :—"Go to sinners with tears in your eyes ;" let them see that the solicitude you avow is unaffected and real. Frequently,

under a heart-searching appeal, the truth has come home to the conscience with irresistible conviction. That conviction has instantly led to the formation of new plans of life. So far the effect has answered to the cause; and, had those resolves been carried out into habitual practice, by so much the Gospel would have carried its conquest. But, the work not being followed up, the resolves thus promisingly made are left to wither and die. Like the stone thrown into the placid lake, the undulating circles become fainter, and fainter, and less distinct, as they increase in distance from their central point.

CHAPTER VI.

RESULTS OF THE MINISTRY—PROSPERITY THE CONSEQUENCE OF PIOUS ZEAL—
GOSPEL RESULTS NOT ALWAYS CONCOMITANT WITH THE MEANS BY WHICH
THEY ARE INSTRUMENTALLY PRODUCED—ENTHUSIASM DEFENDED—PRI-
MITIVE AND MODERN PREACHING CONTRASTED—REVIVAL SERVICES
VIRTUALLY PROSCRIBED BY TRAVELLING PREACHERS GENERALLY—
EXPERIMENTAL PREACHING RECOMMENDED—THE REV. MR. GRIMSHAW'S
AND MR. WESLEY'S LABOURS—PRIVILEGES OF THE SAINTS DESCRIBED.

THE results of the Methodist Ministry are either intermediate or final ; either relating to time or to eternity. The first class of results are those which relate to, and are measured by, time ; the other, those which are consummated in glory. Gospel results are consecutive ; rising in a graduating ratio, until the structure, which lays its foundation in grace, finds its top-stone in glory. Indeed, grace and glory are co-relatives—one in essence, though differing in degree ; grace is glory in commencement, and glory is grace in consummation. Mr. Wesley has somewhat quaintly told us, that “ time is a fragment of eternity cut off at both ends.” The Rev. J. A. James, says :—“ There is no such thing as time ; it is but space occupied by incident. It is the same to eternity as matter is to infinite space ; a portion of the immense occupied by something within the sphere of mortal sense. We ought not to calculate our age by our passing years, but by the passing of feelings and events. It is what we have and suffered that makes us old.”

As showers are the usual symbols of fruitfulness to the earth, so the dew-fall of the Holy Spirit upon the vineyard

of the Lord, under the ministry of the Gospel, is invariably indicative of spiritual prosperity. This, indeed, is the end of ministerial labour, the seal of ministerial fidelity.

Nothing can be more delightful to a devoted minister of Christ than to see Zion in prosperity; her cords lengthened; her stakes strengthened; her institutions honoured; her ordinances improved; her converts multiplied; and piety advancing throughout all her departments. This is, indeed, as it should be; and if the state and aspects of any branch of Methodism do not correspond with such a representation, the why and wherefore are to be traced either to a non-application, or a misapplication, of the means which God Almighty has placed in the hands of his ministers to bring such a state about. Nothing is more natural, and nothing is more certain, than that the blessed God should honour the means of his own appointment; and that those means, whenever or wherever employed, according to the terms and spirit of the appointment, should accomplish the purposes for which they are called into requisition. The history of Methodism is a running commentary on this principle. In all times and places, where preachers and people have joined issue with the Holy Spirit to carry on, and carry out, the purposes of the Gospel ministry, prosperity has been the invariable result.

The results of faithful preaching do not always immediately follow the application of the causes to which they may be instrumentally ascribed. In some instances, "one soweth and another reapeth." Even of some of the Apostles it was said, "other men laboured, and ye have entered into the fruit of their labour." To seek for the harvest of spiritual labours only in the immediate and visible results, would be not less absurd than to take our measure of infinite space

from the limited prospect with which our short-sighted vision is bounded; or to estimate the endless ages of eternity by the transient revolutions of time. See how this case is made out in the Acts of the Apostles. Paul and Silas are favoured with an extraordinary vision. A man of Macedonia appears to the preachers, and imploringly says, "Come over and help us." They, assuredly gathering that the vision was Divine, immediately went into Macedonia; but, after enduring the greatest cruelties and sufferings, only two souls, namely, Lydia and the Philippian jailer, appear to have been the immediate fruit of their ministry. But that visit ultimately led to the establishment of a number of churches in various parts of south-eastern Europe. The fruit of faithful preaching is not always apparent in its proximate symptoms; not always immediate in its results; not always proportioned to the degree of ministerial fidelity employed. In this, as in other parts of the Christian economy, faith is sometimes severely taxed and exercised. But it is encouraging to know that the time and measure are both with the Lord, and, though the harvest may be delayed, it cannot be defeated.

Though success in the ministry is not always to be taken as the measure of ministerial duty, yet all will agree that the performance of duty, when accompanied or followed by Divine success, is delightful beyond all comparison. Visible success is not always vouchsafed to the messengers of mercy; yet there are seasons when the dry bones become instinct with life; when God sets his seal to the work of his servants, and when the thunders of Sinai are lost in the melting sounds of a Saviour's dying love.

The history of Methodism throughout has been distinguished from that of every other community by the occasional

revivals of spiritual religion. With few exceptions, however, revivals are virtually proscribed by the Travelling Preachers, especially in circuit towns ; and, therefore, it is chiefly within the precincts of the Lay Ministry, in the rural districts, that this relic of our primitive economy is kept alive. The author is well aware, that when, as Local Preachers, we depart from the cold, calculating sentimentalism which characterises much of the formalism of the present day, and take a more warm and generous view of Gospel means and objects, we at once expose ourselves to the charge of enthusiasm, and are set down as fanatics and fools. If by enthusiasm, according to its commonly-received acceptation, be meant an "expectation of the end without the use of the means," then we repudiate the charge *in toto caelo*, and send it back to those from whom it emanates. If, however, by the charge be meant the employment of zeal and energy invincible to opposition in the prosecution of ministerial objects, then we plead guilty to the charge, and admit that, in this sense, we are enthusiasts ; and we will be enthusiasts ; and we pray God that this enthusiasm may be revived throughout the length and breadth of our Connexion ; that it may rise higher in the scale of religious temperature, degree after degree, as rapidly as may be, until the fire of Divine love shall have communicated its pure and generous flame to every human heart !

In the palmy days of our Connexional history, when pulpit exercises were more strongly imbued with zeal and energy, Methodism was denominated "Christianity in earnest." But the fear may be entertained, that it is far less entitled to that honorary distinction, in the present day, than when it was first applied. Much of the simple but energetic piety of the fathers of the present ministry has been substituted by a

cold and studied formalism, which possesses few of the sterling attributes of the spirit-stirring ministry of bygone times. It is admitted that the class of men of whom William Bramwell was a type, were not distinguished by extensive erudition or remarkable for sparkling talent ; were little skilled in meretricious embellishments of style or pomp of diction ; but they were men of unassuming excellence, singularly fitted to meet the difficulties and discharge the duties of the ministerial office with great acceptance, and still greater usefulness. Their sermons were characterised by plainness, point, and power ; and, though little polished by human adornment, contained the germs of mighty thought, and sometimes touched—

“ A secret spring
Which made the soul of man recoil upon
Itself, and tremble at the prospect of
Eternity !”

Many of the sermons of the most erudite Travelling Preachers, of the present day, are beautiful specimens of composition. They are lofty in conception, elegant in language, vigorous in description, and, indeed, possess whatever is calculated to dazzle and attract ; but, generally, they are too cold, too learned, too speculative, too uninteresting, for the great majority of our congregations. In a Methodistical sense, there is nothing noble, nothing dignified, nothing elevating, nothing enthusiastic about them. They kindle no warm and generous emotions ; they feed no living fires ; and, therefore, are far less adapted to the pulpit than the press.*

* In a recent publication, a comparative sketch of the political powers of those two great statesmen, Pitt and Fox, is given with uncommon vigour of description ; and the following extract faithfully represents the two classes of preachers who are found within the pale of the Methodist ministry :—“Pitt’s oratory was like the frozen stalactites and pyramids, which glitter around Niagara in mid-winter, stately, clear, and cold ; Fox’s, like the vehement waters which sweep over its brink, and roar and

Revival services, in the present day, are far more "honoured in their breach than in their observance." In a few isolated spots, rendered verdant by Local Preachers, oases relieve the dreary effect of the surrounding monotony ; but revival meetings are generally discouraged by Travelling Preachers, because they interfere with a system of prudential policy which has extensively obtained, by prescription, the force of law.

In Newton's Life of Grimshaw, it is said :—"Perhaps the theory of the Gospel was never better understood since the days of the Apostles than at present. But many who preach it lay too much stress upon a systematical scheme of sentiments, and too little upon that life and power—that vital, experimental, and practical influence—which form the character and regulate the conduct of an established Christian." Our statements may be full and simple, connected and unfettered ; but, unless there be in sermons a fervent, telling application, which finds reciprocation in the sympathies of the soul, the best instructions will impart only a cold and uninfluential knowledge. Experimental preaching, when the heart of the preacher beats responsively to his doctrine, will do infinitely more to promote the spiritual interests of a people than the most elaborate exhibitions of abstract truth. The life of religion is fed, not by dry, studied exhibitions of Scriptural doctrine, but by direct application of the truth conveyed by powerful appeals to the heart. Witsius, in his *De Vero Theologo*, says :—"He is the most effective preacher, who, when he has not only heard, but seen, and handled, and tasted of the Word of Life ; and

boil in the abyss below. Pitt was art ; Fox nature. Pitt was dignified, cool, cautious ; Fox was manly, generous, brave. Pitt had a mind ; Fox a soul. Pitt was a majestic automaton ; Fox a living man."

has been taught, not by mere speculation, but by actual experience, what he has found out; he safely inculcates, from the assured persuasion of his mind, and applies to every case from his own knowledge of what is suitable to each." Experimental addresses flow directly to the heart with a warmth and impressiveness, which is like the enlivening glow of the sun, as contrasted with the cold clearness of moonlight. For, although the Word of God is the same under the varied aspects of mannerism in which it may be presented to congregations, yet the glow of zeal proceeding from the experimental enjoyment of the truths delivered, touches the master-springs of conviction, and, consequently, greatly aids the saving effect of the Gospel ministry. It is certainly necessary to convince the understanding, because that is the highway to the heart. But there is a far greater necessity that the heart, which is the seat of action and contains "the issues of life," should be influenced and moved by practical appeals, in order to bring it under the control of the Gospel. King James is said to have remarked to one of his courtiers, when speaking of the vividness of description and faithfulness of appeal of one of his chaplains, "This man preaches before me just as if death was seated at his elbow." Blair, in his Lectures on the Eloquence of the Pulpit, says, "Gravity and warmth united form that character of preaching which the French call *onction*; the affecting, penetrating, interesting manner, flowing from a strong sensibility of heart in the preacher to the importance of those truths which he delivers, and an earnest desire that they may make a full impression on the hearts of his hearers." Our ministry is generally too cold and phlegmatic. Do we plead "in the demonstration of the Spirit, and beseech men to be reconciled to God?" Do we, as

necessity requires, “cry aloud, spare not, lift up our voices like trumpets, and show the people their transgressions?” Do we, by affectionate appeals, enforce the necessity of a change of heart, and of holiness of life? Do our bowels yearn over ignorant, careless, and impenitent sinners? Do we “tell them, *weeping*, that they are the enemies of the Cross of Christ?” Do we “teach them publicly, from house to house, at all seasons, and *with many tears*?” Or, rather, do we not study to gain the applause of our fellow-men, as though “to point a moral and adorn a tale” were all a minister had to do?

How much do modern Methodist preachers suffer by a comparison with those of bygone days! The Rev. Mr. Grimshaw, the clerical associate and fellow-labourer of Mr. Wesley, usually preached as many as twenty times a week; and the Founder of Methodism, in addition to his numerous publications and other labours, is calculated to have preached 40,000 sermons, not to notice occasional exhortations and addresses in the course of his ministry, besides travelling, annually, between four and five thousand miles. Such labours brought out, in full display, the mainspring of their zeal and energy; “the constraining love of Christ” producing sympathy for perishing sinners. We find it much more easy to register our admiration of labours so generous and Godlike, than to imitate the practical operation of the high moral and religious qualities with which they were so rarely, but yet so transcendently, endowed.

Among the direct results of ministerial agency, when properly discharged and faithfully applied, may be numbered in consecutive order, pardon of sin, peace of conscience, adoption into the family of God, the witness of the Spirit, holiness of heart and life, and, finally, the fruition of glory in

the eternal world. The preliminary enjoyments here enumerated vary in degree, according to the measure and strength of faith put forth in exercise ; for, although the blessings of Christianity are offered to all,—irrespective of country, colour, clime, sex, age, or condition, — faith, in every instance, determines both the degree and the duration of spiritual joy, and constitutes the varied shades of distinction between one man and another in the religious world.

In speaking of the privileges of Christianity, the author is free to confess his want of ability to do full justice to the subject. They contain a depth which no line can fathom ; a height which no conception can reach ; a breadth which no comprehension can grasp ; and a length which no intelligence can measure. The ample stores of rhetoric ; the force and beauty of Eastern imagery ; the richness and variety of thought and expression, have all been laid under repeated contribution, to describe the fulness, the freeness, and the perpetuity of the treasures of grace and mercy ; and yet, after all, it must be confessed, the subject of privilege remains a problem unsolved and unsolvable. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.” Indeed, every successive contemplation of the subject only serves to increase the previous difficulties with which it was surrounded ; and after all our researches, with a view to penetrate the mystery in its length, and breadth, and height, we are compelled to confess that it is a subject for thought, rather than for discussion ; to be conceived, rather than to be described.

There is something so exceedingly vast and comprehensive in the privileges which Christianity embodies, that we are at a perfect loss to know where to place boundary lines to mark

their extent. Taking our station on the Word of God, the only infallible standard of appeal in religion, and looking at the vivid and soul-inspiring descriptions therein contained, we are taught, not by inference, but by direct intimation, that the privileges of Christianity are like the desires of man, measureless and unconfined ; bounded only by the limits of a faith too often, alas ! cramped in its exercise. Were faith allowed its free and unfettered course, it would stop short of nothing necessary to constitute the perfection, the plenitude, and the perpetuity of human bliss. To select the experience of any particular Christian as a standard, by which to measure the privileges of grace, would be just as absurd as to suppose that the world is no larger than a sheet of paper, because the map that describes it is confined within that space. What says the Saviour ? “ Verily, verily, I say unto you, if ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say to yonder mountain remove, and it shall obey you ;” and again, “ All things are possible to him that believeth.” It is a matter of comparatively little moment whether these words are to be understood literally or figuratively : they are evidently intended to show the moral power with which the grace of faith is armed.

Let us select an illustration from St. Paul’s prayer for the Ephesian converts :—“ That he would grant you, according to the riches of his glory, to be strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man ; that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height ; and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be *filled with all the fulness of God !*” Here we find no assignable limits ; no circumscriptive bounds ;

no definable point at which to stop short of being "filled with all the fulness of God!" Throughout this remarkable prayer the Apostle evidently labours for language by which to give expression to ideas too great for human utterance. The words, "may be able to comprehend with all saints," cannot be fully expressed in any translational form. "To be filled with God," is an idea which leaves our conceptions in darkness and perplexity. "To be filled with the fulness of God," adds increase to the difficulty; but "to be filled with ALL the fulness of God," as Dr. Clarke justly observes, bewilders the sense and confounds the understanding! And yet such, whatever it may import, is the privilege of every believer in Christ.

That we do not enjoy religion in the full essence and vitality of its power, and in the full extent and plenitude of its present fruition, is no argument against the doctrine. The prayer put into our mouths, by the Founder of Methodism, is a striking comment on the above remarkable passage:—

"Stretch my faith's capacity
Wider, and yet wider still;
Then with all that is in Thee
My soul for ever fill!"

If language has any meaning, then, what is the import of these prayers? Why, that the Christian cannot ask too much, if what he asks he labours to obtain!

PART IV.

SUGGESTIONS FOR RENDERING THE METHODIST LAY MINISTRY MORE COMMENSURATE WITH ITS ORIGIN AND DESIGN.

“We have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be of God, and not of us.”—2 Corinth. iv., 7.

“Preach the word ; be instant in season, out of season ; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. Watch thou in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of thy ministry.”—2 Tim. iv., 2, 5.



The Local or Lay Ministry.

CHAPTER I.

APELLES' WISH MORALISED—CLOSER UNION RECOMMENDED IN THE LOCAL MINISTRY—APOSTOLIC SANCTION OF DELIBERATIVE ASSEMBLIES—LOCAL CONFERENCES ADVANTAGEOUS—FREQUENT MEETINGS OF MINISTERS IN PREVIOUS AGES—SUCH DELIBERATIVE MEETINGS ESSENTIAL TO PROSPERITY.

“Give me the priest these graces shall possess ;
Of an ambassador the just address :
A father's tenderness, a shepherd's care,
A leader's courage, which the cross can bear :
A ruler's awe, a watchman's wakeful eye,
A pilot's skill, the helm in storms to ply ;
A prophet's inspiration from above ;
A teacher's knowledge, and a Saviour's love.

It is related of Apelles, a celebrated Greek painter in the time of Alexander the Great, that being once asked why he bestowed so much labour upon the productions of his pencil, made this memorable reply, “I paint for eternity.” Perhaps this answer was nothing more than an ingenious stroke of artistic policy, expressive of a wish that his fame might survive his existence ; a wish natural enough by a man whose sole ambition was the acquisition of human glory. Now, although as ministers of Christ our motives to act are far higher and holier in their character and aim, yet we cannot but discover in the words of Apelles a moral of great practical utility and importance ; and one which, if honestly applied to the several departments of the work assigned us,

would attach to our best acts the stamp of perpetuity. If every preacher could say with feelings of enthusiasm equal to those with which Apelles was inspired, "I preach for eternity!" and if every private Christian, in all his public, private, social, and family acts of devotion, could rest his appeal to God on a similar ground, not only would the aspects of religion become more bright and encouraging; but the spirit of religion would reacquire its original purity, power, and place.

Philosophers tell us that there is a gravitating point in space, which is deemed the centre of the universe. Let us conceive of some intelligent being occupying that focal point, and comprehending the movements of the grand machinery in its concurrent and contrary motions, and watching the bearings of that great central influence which preserves uniformity throughout the whole. Now what is fancy in one case, is fact in another. We are placed at this moment at a point of the moral universe from which we can look around and see the complex and diversified machinery—constructed by divine skill—moving for purposes of incalculable importance; and which, by the superintending power of the government of God, is so harmoniously arranged in its varied combination, that things apparently contrary are admirably made to concur.

In suggesting measures for carrying on and carrying out the working plans of Methodism, the author conceives that one great means of promoting the more extensive spread and permanent establishment of the vital principles of Methodism, in their saving influence and successful operation, is a wider cultivation of the primitive spirit of religious federalism in the members of the Local Ministry. It is presumed that all corporate bodies, whether secular or

religious, are cemented by one common bond, actuated by one common motive, regulated by one common law, and are aiming at one common end. The success of all great enterprises depends on the skilful application of combined effort. The secret of military success is not always found in the numerical strength of an army, but in the skill of those who have to direct its operations;—to condensed energy; to indomitable courage; to the improvement of critical conjunctures, and other adventitious circumstances. It is the wisdom of a skilful general to concentrate his forces, to consolidate his disposable power, to bring his men to act together, well knowing, that, if his ranks are broken and his men scattered, defeat must follow as a necessary consequence.

In all enterprises where a common end is sought by a combination of agency, unity of effort is essential to accomplishment; because, however comprehensive and perfect a scheme of operations may be, both in principle and detail, if there be disjunction on the part of the agency employed, the end may have to grapple with the risk of defeat. The converse of this position is equally apparent. There is much practical truth in the aphorism, "Unity is strength;" and the effect of its antithesis, "Severance is weakness," is as easily calculated. The Local Preachers of every circuit may be regarded as a separate municipality, possessing a community of Connexional interest, and seeking to accomplish an object common to all.

Although, in principle, the Local Preachers constitute one great association, and in their case

"Mind with mind concurrently should act,"

yet, in practice, and, consequently, in effect, they are little more than a number of disjointed items of a great whole

Every Local Preacher forms an integral part of an immense working power ; and the practical development of individual agency, whatever may be the *modus operandi*, contributes to show what the general result might be, if all those separate agencies were acting under one general principle of combination.

There is in nature a property which we call attraction,—that is, a power or principle by which bodies mutually tend towards each other. There is another property, which we call gravitation,—that is, a power or principle by which all bodies tend towards a common centre ; and there is a third property, which we call repulsion,—that is, a power or principle by which bodies fly off from each other. Now when a Christian society, well arranged, is in a healthy, working state, attraction and gravitation are in active operation. The members are attracted by, and mutually tend towards, each other ; and the whole gravitate towards Christ, who is the soul and centre of spiritual gravity or attraction. But, when a Christian society, or any association, is composed of disjointed items, then the elements of repulsion are brought into play, and functional derangement marks the acts and proceedings of the body corporate.

In the early constitution of the Christian Church, and during the existence of the Apostolic dynasty, the common motto of the infant ministry was, “ Each for all, and all for Christ.” Unity was their distinguishing badge ; and that unity contained a spell, and diffused an influence, to which the Jews, the Greeks, and the Romans were compelled to yield an unwilling homage. The Apostles, and other ministers acting in concert with them, usually met at Jerusalem as a deliberative assembly, to confer on the measures best adapted to extend and establish the infant cause of Christ.

Having digested their working plans, they went forth in the several directions assigned to each, and on performing their respective duties returned to Jerusalem to report the success of their ministry, and to carry on consultations with reference to prospective labours.

There can be little doubt of the advantage of such a course as that adopted by the Apostles, if it were copied by the members of the Local Ministry within their respective circuits, when such conferences fell within the limits of practicability. It usually happens that a considerable proportion of the Local Preachers reside in the circuit-town. If they were to hold monthly meetings, many points of vital importance might be prayerfully discussed ; the state of religion in the rural districts would be thus frequently brought under review, and measures debated promotive of the general prosperity. These meetings—opened by prayer for Divine direction to guide in the selection of such means as might be best adapted to secure the advancement of vital piety ; and closed with special invocations for Divine aid and influence in their respective ministrations—would confer many advantages both direct and collateral. Each preacher would feel the necessity of possessing what the old writers called a *speculum gregis*, or a *looking-glass of the flock*. It would induce him to watch the aspects and record the variations of each place where his ministry was exercised ; and that knowledge would exert a beneficial control in the choice of suitable subjects for public instruction and advantage. It would tend to promote the personal religion of each preacher, and would generally infuse and diffuse a much larger measure of the element of Christian fraternity.

The author has long been of opinion, that if the principle of ministerial unity were more extensively carried out under

the Holy Spirit, it would greatly increase the spiritual prosperity of the Connexion. It is by the union of minister with minister that more correct and enlarged views of Scriptural doctrine are obtained ; increased exertion called into activity ; communications made of ministerial plans ; encouragement given to the interchange of friendly relations and kindred sympathies. It is by the union which the several parts supply, that the body becomes more perfectly connected with its covenant Head. If Solomon's aphorism be true in a general sense, that "in the multitude of counsellors there is safety," how much that sentiment acquires importance when particularly applied to the counsels of God's ministers, in their special reference to the interests of his church.

Meetings of this character, and with these objects, are by no means novel. According to Strype, the historian, meetings of ministers were frequently held in and before his day, within given districts, under the presidency of some experienced minister, for the purpose of discussing *seriatim* passages of Scripture previously proposed, always commencing and ending with prayer. These meetings were put down by an arbitrary enactment of Queen Elizabeth, at the instance of her favourite, the Earl of Leicester, and in direct opposition to a most noble and faithful protest from Archbishop Grindall. In Archbishop Tenison's Circular, dated April 6th, 1699, quoted by Dr. Woodward, in his account of religious societies, there is the following advice : "It were to be wished that the clergy of every neighbourhood would agree upon frequent meetings, to consult for the good of religion in general, and to advise with one another about the difficulties that may happen in their particular cures ; as, by what methods any evil custom may be most readily broken ; how a sinner may most effectually be reclaimed ; and in general, how each of

them, in their several circumstances, may contribute most to the advancement of religion." Such a course would promote closer union with the Federal Head of the Christian ministry, and a more connected harmony among her working members ; it would produce a continuous supply of spiritual gifts and graces, and carry on the salvation of the church in God's own way, by uniting preachers as the links of one great chain, and make each to each the medium of spiritual communication and life.

It is difficult to understand how a complex machine, like that of the Local Ministry, can carry on its work with any considerable amount of success, without occasional inspection of its several departments, in order to ascertain whether all its parts perform their functions regularly, so as to promote the general design ; and whether any and what alterations and additions ought to be introduced to regulate its mode of operation and increase its momentum. The work might become more complicated, and the workmen require more particular instructions. Numberless points might arise involving questions of difficult solution, which, being viewed in different aspects and by different lights, might afford facilities for supplying such answers as would effectually meet the case to which those answers were applied.

In all the great departments of life, questions of importance are usually settled in deliberative assemblies. The great concerns of the nation are adjusted in the senate-house ; military affairs of consequence are arranged in councils of war ; questions of legal difficulty are usually referred to the judicial bench ; and the different sections of the church have their assemblies for ordinary or special purposes. Though meetings of the Local Preachers, after the manner of those suggested, would be far less assuming, yet they would be

not less important in their essential character, and might become of great practical utility to themselves and others. Conducted in a Christian spirit, their beneficial results would be far beyond doubt or peradventure. The tone of the private and public character of the Lay Ministry would be elevated ; the elements of reciprocal affection would be greatly strengthened ; their knowledge of their work, and the best materials for performing it, would be largely increased ; and whilst at each meeting they would receive accessions to their love, and zeal, and energy, they would go forth amongst the people as flames of heavenly fire.

Even in the days of Jewish declension, when darkness brooded over the land of Judea, and just before the spirit of prophecy, the last of their theocratical distinctions, had ceased, there were some remaining who kept up the exercises of social devotion : “Then, they that feared the Lord spake often one to another : and the Lord hearkened and heard it, and a book of remembrance was written before him for them that feared the Lord, and that thought upon his name. And they shall be mine, saith the Lord of Hosts, in that day when I make up my jewels ; and I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him.”—Malachi iii., 16, 17. Though this intimation is given in very general terms, still, it seems to embody the essentials of that course we now recommend. That these worshippers were sincere, is clearly to be inferred from the high commendation which their conduct receives, as well as the delightful result with which it is promised to be rewarded in the final day.

CHAPTER II.

STATE OF POPULATION IN LARGE TOWNS—DISTRICT VISITATION IN TOWNS
RECOMMENDED—UNION OF DENOMINATIONAL BODIES TO PROMOTE THE
OBJECT DESIRABLE—TRACT DISTRIBUTION A MEANS OF AWAKENING IN-
QUIRY—CASE ILLUSTRATIVE OF ITS ADVANTAGES—SUGGESTION OFFERED.

IN a former part of this Essay, the author has referred to the demoralised condition of many of our large towns, and he now returns to that appalling question, as showing the imperative necessity of framing some plans of amelioration more adapted to meet the particular state of circumstances than those already in operation.

In our large towns we can boast of splendid temples, overflowing congregations, and ministers of first-rate popular talent. Much zeal and liberality are annually expended in enlarging plans of social and religious philanthropy, to meet the general state of destitution at home and abroad. But, it must be confessed, many of these plans and institutions are much wider in object than in application. Whilst we send bibles and missionaries to the heathen, which must certainly be regarded as one of the delightful fruits of operative Christianity, we seem to overlook the widely-spread destitution at home, and appear to imagine that our pecuniary contributions will be accepted as a full discharge and compensation for the neglect of personal duties of higher and more commanding importance.

This state of things is either true or false. If it be true, —and the author deliberately adopts that alternative,—then

it involves questions of the highest conceivable moment. Though the author refers more particularly to large towns, yet the description he is about to give, and the remedial measures he is about to propose, are applicable to the entire field of ministerial labour. It cannot be denied, that, in every town, a considerable part of the population never attend the Sanctuary of God ; some through age ; others through sickness or infirmity ; and the non-attendance of a far larger number has to be placed to causes which can afford no excuse whatever. These facts clearly show that general appeals from our pulpits, however powerful, are utterly lost on those individuals ; and the case seems to submit the choice of one of two alternatives :—either to leave them altogether in their sins, or to construct a plan of arrangements adapted to the circumstances in which such individuals are found. It will not relieve preachers from their official responsibility to say, “The Sanctuary is open at stated times, and, therefore, those who are physically able are bound to attend its ministrations.” If it were a question of mere social policy, then this reasoning might be admissible ; but it is a culpable subterfuge when viewed in its application to the deathless interests of immortal souls.

The conduct of Government, in reference to the recent national visitation by cholera, may suggest some valuable hints of a practical nature. On learning that the disease was approaching our shores, the Cabinet held a succession of meetings, appointed boards of health, and instituted the best means which human skill and prudence could suggest, as well to prevent and check the ravages, as to cure, if possible, that dreadful malady. Every precautionary measure which the soundest medical wisdom could devise was adopted, and the faculty were unremitting in their

endeavours to prevent what, in innumerable cases, set at nought all methods of human prescription. This was a wise, but necessary policy ; otherwise this country might have been much more extensively depopulated than it was. And is not the existence and fearful spread of that malady which is incomparably more destructive in its present ravages and future results than cholera, suggestive of a similar course of policy ? Ought not spiritual practitioners to be tremblingly alive to the state of the morally dead and dying around them ? And ought not the appliances to be the very best that could be devised to meet the condition of those affected by the moral epidemic ? Viewed by analogy, ministers have greatly the advantage of medical men. In the cholera, the few cases cured appear to have yielded to accidental treatment, rather than to any ascertained rule of medical science. The varying symptoms appear to have baffled the skill of the most celebrated of the faculty ; but, in cases of moral disease, the symptoms are well known, and the remedy and mode of application both infallible.

To meet the general state of circumstances as now presented, the author proposes a plan of district visitation, to be varied in detail according to local circumstances. His general proposition is, that each town should be divided into a given number of districts ; that a board should be formed, consisting of delegates from such religious communities as would be willing to co-operate, in order to devise a working scheme of arrangements ; and that a number of lay agents should be appointed to supply the several districts with weekly instruction in the elementary principles of Christianity, going from house to house, or otherwise, as might be deemed most conducive to the object sought ; making the reading of the Scriptures the uniform groundwork of their labours,

and opening and closing each meeting with prayer and singing, if practicable. The delegates should mark all noticeable occurrences in the prosecution of their labours, and meet once a month to report progress. Thus a Christian Instruction Society might be formed on a practicable basis, and embrace a comprehensive plan, capable, under the blessing of Almighty God, of conveying a large amount of spiritual instruction to those who, by reason of age, infirmity, or other less-excusable reasons, never appear within the walls of God's house.

Were some plan of this kind adopted, and steadily and perseveringly carried out, we should see an amazing difference in the criminal statistics of our respective localities, and not only the moral aspects of society brightened, but its moral constitution essentially altered and improved. At such a crisis and in such a state of things as that which we so greatly deplore, it is much to be desired that the right-minded of every community of Christians would merge their minor differences in the higher considerations of moral policy, and, by a unity of design, followed out by a corresponding unity of effort, labour to bring about a "consummation so devoutly to be wished."

It is not a little to be regretted, that the various bodies of professing Christians should have so long entrenched themselves within the slender trellis-work of their respective communions, and virtually refused to co-operate in general plans of usefulness, lest, by such co-operation, they should damage their own peculiar interests. It cannot but be deplored, that, in Britain, the beacon to the world, the several bodies of Protestant Christians should have so narrowly restricted themselves to one indispensable form and interpretation of the Christian constitution, and have denounced as heterodox

every creed, formulary, and constitution in which they could not distinctly trace an exact identity with their own. Now, although it cannot be expected nor desired that all the articles and formularies of the several sections of the Christian Church should be strictly regulated by a legislative act of uniformity, yet the author is of opinion that every pious Churchman or Dissenter who really desires the moral and spiritual elevation of his race, would hail with unaffected delight any conventional plan which embodied in its principle and operation the widely-recognised apothegm, "Each for all, and all for Christ," and which, without compromising the sacred rights of conscience, might receive the seal and sanction of all Protestant communities, irrespective of their different creeds and designations, and induce them to bring their best efforts to bear with beneficial effect on the vice and misery which are so fearfully extensive. The man who is anxious to carry out the application of the Apostle's statement will never want inducement to labour, nor a field in which that labour may be advantageously employed.

There can be little doubt but that an immense amount of spiritual good might be communicated to the ignorant and profane of every locality by the employment of pious laymen, to act in conjunction with those who minister between the porch and the altar, in assisting to discharge duties which belong to the pastoral, rather than to the ministerial office. Though this kind of agency would add a somewhat new feature to the administration of the Gospel, yet it would in nowise contravene the principles of Christianity. Moses, when his labours became too heavy for his personal discharge, appointed seventy elders to aid him in administering the functions of his responsible office. So, in the primitive churches, subordinate agencies were appointed by the Apostles,

in carrying on the work of the world's evangelisation ; and the attention of the Established Church of this nation has lately been called to the subject, and hence, it has appointed Scripture readers, to assist the clergy in discharging one branch of their pastoral labours, and whose duties bear some affinity to those now recommended in this division of this Essay.

By lay visitation, a large extent of ground might be brought under regular cultivation, which must necessarily be altogether neglected, or receive very partial attention, if left to the stated ministry. Particular cases would thus be brought under weekly review, and such cases would suggest their own modes of treatment. In the Providential economy, the Almighty has variously gifted his creatures ; and this appears to have been done for the purpose of supplying such diversified agency as might be necessary to cultivate the different parts of the vineyard of the Lord ; and the wisdom of that Providence is signally manifested in the appropriate fitness each possesses for the specific work that might be assigned to them. The methodical arrangement of a suitable lay agency is, in the judgment of the author, a serious desideratum. District visitation, if prayerfully and steadily carried out, would speedily give an upward aspect to the state of religion amongst us. It would lay bare all those excuses which are too frequently urged to palliate non-attendance on the public ministry of the Gospel. These practical displays of solicitude would overcome the most inveterate prejudices ; and the church would be continually receiving fresh accessions to the flock of the Redeemer. Combination of effort is the soul of enterprise ; and a well-organised district visitation machinery, once set fairly in motion, would carry its contemplated results, despite every kind of human or superhuman opposition.

With district visitation, tract distribution might be effectively employed as an auxiliary, though it ought to be carried out by other agency. The circulation of religious tracts has been of immense benefit in this and other countries, and though its machinery is somewhat mechanical in form, it might be rendered immensely important in result. A well-constituted Tract Society, when the working plans are properly methodised and its agency is adapted to the work, can scarcely be overrated as to its moral and religious advantages. A tract may be read in secret. It counts no tears ; it witnesses no blushes of conscious guilt or shame ; but, having stealthily wormed its way to the source of conviction, it seizes the conscience, affects the heart, and suggests the first steps to reformation of life. These silent but effective pioneers have often prepared in the desert a highway for the Lord.

The author distinctly recollects, that, about twenty-five years since, a warm-hearted Local Preacher left the tract called "The Gospel Invitation," with an old pensioner who had been remarkable for his hostility to religion. On leaving the tract, the distributor made an incidental observation, which induced the old man to read it. He had not proceeded far before he was unanswerably smitten by conviction. As he proceeded his convictions increased. He was dreadfully alarmed. On the following Sabbath the distributor found him in the pangs of the new birth. He directed the sinner to the Saviour, instructed and prayed with him. The author visited him whilst struggling with nature's throes. At length grace triumphed, and redemption came in all its saving power. The case was so remarkable throughout, that the author drew it up, and forwarded it to the Religious Tract Society, and received in return a copy of their bound publications.

In tract distribution great regularity should be observed in the order of distribution, otherwise confusion will be the result; and each distributor should make it an undeviating rule to follow up the reading of each tract by some practical hint bearing upon its particular subject, and delivered in an affectionate manner. If circumstances are favourable, entreaty might be added ; and, if a word of prayer could be superadded, it might, under the influence of the Holy Spirit, leave a lasting blessing behind. All agency throughout the wide circle of religious administration has one common centre of unity, one grand point of convergence, from which light and heat emanate ; and the man who draws his supplies from above, will rarely have to complain of barrenness either in his own soul or in his labours.

CHAPTER III.

PASTORAL VISITATION GREATLY NEGLECTED BY TRAVELLING PREACHERS—
PASTORAL MORE IMPORTANT THAN MINISTERIAL DUTIES, BOTH TO THE
FLOCK AND TO THE MINISTER—DR. DODDRIDGE'S RULES—TESTIMONIES
OF MATTHEW HENRY, PROFESSOR MILLER, AND THE REV. LEGH RICHMOND
—A CASE IN POINT.

ABOUT ten years ago, a gentleman offered a prize of one hundred pounds for the best Essay on the Pastoral Office. The author, in common with many others, was much delighted when that announcement was made, because a work on the Christian Pastorate was a desideratum. The prize was awarded to the Rev. Alfred Barrett, whose work possesses very considerable merit; but it is chiefly confined to the ministerial department of a preacher's office, and only incidentally treats on pastoral duties and claims.

The duties of a Christian pastor differ from those of a district visitor in this particular: that, whilst the former have respect to individuals who already form part of the flock of the Redeemer, the other have respect to persons who have not yet been brought within the Gospel fold; and the respective duties pertaining to these two classes require an agency suited each to each. It is extremely desirable that the district visitor (who would generally have to address unenlightened persons) should have some acquaintance with the natural state and practical workings of the human heart; and such a knowledge of the Scriptures as would supply facilities for suitable instruction. But pastoral duties more immediately concern parties who have been favoured with

spiritual illumination ; and, therefore, a pastor should have, not only an *experimental* acquaintance with religion, but should possess a ready competence to administer such instruction, advice, encouragement, or correction as might be required by the varied and varying exigencies which arise out of the present disciplinary state of man.

The author is of opinion that the office of a pastor is far more important than that of a minister ; because, whilst the duties of the latter are *general* in their application, those of the former are *personal*. Public rebukes from the pulpit do not always command conviction. The heart, ever ready to evade the force of personal appeal, resorts to any subterfuge which may serve to give a colouring for the transfer of condemnation to other persons, reserving to itself impunity ; but, in closing with individuals, when personally addressed, you shut the side doors of every false refuge, and carry truth at once to the conscience with unanswerable conviction.

In the early part of our Connexional history the ministerial and pastoral offices were united, and the secret of a preacher's usefulness was to be sought not in the blandishments of pulpit oratory, but in the less ostentatious, though far more powerful, pleadings in the several domestic sanctuaries of the people. The pastoral duties are now transferred altogether to class-leaders, and, except at the quarterly visitations, the members of Society are rarely personally addressed by the preachers.

The author has for many years entertained the opinion, that personal application to the individualities of our people is a work of far greater magnitude and moment than that of the pulpit ministry. Each individual within the range of a minister's charge, has a distinct and separate claim upon his spiritual care and attention, It is a broad truth, that

Local Preachers sustain a degree of responsibility in their respective circuits, much higher than the Travelling Preachers, who, by their period of labour being restricted at most to three years, divide their responsibility among the circuits in which they travel. The Local Preachers seldom extend their labours beyond the bounds of their particular circuits, and, consequently, their responsibility lies within its limits. Every minister of the Gospel unites in himself the offices of watchman and evangelist; and the evangelical department of his work is divided into two branches—the ministry and the pastorate.

In the present day the duties of the pastoral office are much neglected. When Methodist preachers were less assiduous in pulpit preparations, because more slenderly educated, pastoral visitation was followed up with regularity and usefulness. As there are cases that cannot be brought out in the pulpit in all their minute and diversified particulars, so there is much in the varied and varying experience of individuals, with which a minister can only be made acquainted in the privacy of pastoral visitation. But if it be of importance that a minister should possess a key to the experience of his flock individually, then, where his labours are heavy, he may acquit his conscience of the responsible charge of those over whom he watches as one that must give an account, by doing *per alium*, by another, what it might be difficult to do in all cases *per se*, by himself; and thus, by the employment of a co-ordinate agency, set in motion a moral power, which, though emanating from himself, yet worked by other hands, might effectually aid him in his arduous and responsible duties.

If the salvation of men be the paramount object of a minister's labours, then it is difficult to understand how he

can obtain correct information of the individual state of the members of his flock without personal visitation. A skilful practitioner in medical science is extremely careful to weigh the several symptoms which a case may present, in order that he may be safely guided in the treatment to which he may have recourse. A mere charlatan might accidentally hit upon an expedient which suited the case to which it was applied ; but no sensible man would place his life in the hands of an ignorant quack, whose successful experiments were those of chance. Individual cases require individual examination and treatment ; and the moral state of individuals can only be properly ascertained by personal visitation. It seems quite clear that the Apostolic ministry was framed after this pattern. During the three years that St. Paul was resident minister at Ephesus, “he taught the people publicly, and *from house to house* ;” and during that time, “*he ceased not to warn every one of them day and night with tears.*”—Acts xx., 20, *et seq.* Indeed, his intimate knowledge of the spiritual state of a large number of individuals in the several churches, is evident, as well as from his frequent salutations, as from the relative appropriateness of his instructions given in the precise kind of exhortation, encouragement, or rebuke, to which he perfectly well knew the personal distinctness of their experience would instantly respond.

“ But,” as a recent minister has observed, “ the uses of this pastoral system to ourselves are of the highest moment. By a judicious improvement of this intercourse we may receive instruction from the meanest of our flock. Teachers must be constant learners ; and much is learned, consciously or unconsciously, by this system. It is at once the seal to the testimony of the preceding Sabbath, and the treasure-house

which furnishes the most valuable materials for our ensuing ministrations. Perhaps there is no better way of filling up interesting subjects for the pulpit, than in our pastoral course to draw them out familiarly in contact with those individual cases to which they might be adapted. The sermons thus made in our pastoral visitations are of a very different character from those that are composed in the study. If they are less abstract, they are more pointed and experimental. We mark the precise evil requiring caution; the deficiency calling for exhortation; the circumstances needing advice; the distress or perplexity desiring consolation and encouragement; and thus pastoral preaching gives a local character to the style of our pulpit ministry, far more instructive and close in its application."

Dr. Doddridge's rules on this head are very important, and well worthy to be followed:—

"1. To take a more particular account of the souls committed to my care. 2. To visit, as soon as possible, the whole congregation, to learn more particularly the circumstances of themselves, their children, and servants. 3. Will make as exact a list as I can of those I have reason to believe are unconverted, awakened, converted, fit for communion, or already in it. 4. When I hear any particular relating to the religious state of my people, I will visit them and talk with them. 5. I will especially be careful to visit the sick. I will begin immediately with the inspection of those under my own roof, that I may with the greater freedom urge other families to the like care."

A course like this, uniformly carried out, must inevitably be followed by ministerial success. It was the advice of Mathew Henry to ministers, "Acquaint yourselves with the state of your people's souls, their temptations, their infirmities; you will then know the better how to preach to them." Professor Miller, in his pastoral letters, says:—"Rely upon it, that he who hopes to discharge the duties of his pulpit ably, appropriately, seasonably, and to the greatest advantage to

his flock, *without being much among them*, entertains a hope which is perfectly unreasonable, and will certainly be disappointed." "Tell Henry," said the Rev. Leigh Richmond, "his father learnt his most valuable lessons for the ministry *in the poor man's cottage*."

Now, whatever pleasure a minister may have in proclaiming to sinners the glad tidings of salvation, the express commission of the watchman is accompanied by a weight of responsibility unknown to the *mere preacher*. The trembling necessity is laid upon him to "watch for souls, as one that must give an account;" and how can he give "full proof of his ministry," unless he "watch in all things, and do the work of an evangelist?" If he is equally "a debtor to the wise and to the unwise," he can only cancel his high obligations, by giving seasonable warning, encouragement, instruction, or consolation, to do it with the constancy, seriousness, fervour, and energy which every case requires; and thus "become all things to all men, in order that he may save some."

In the year 1815, the Rev. William Harrison, senior,* was appointed to the Hinckley Circuit. He found the Society low in numbers, and still lower in vital piety, and the congregation the mere shadow of a shade. He was not a man of talent, in the popular acceptance of that term, but he possessed a thorough knowledge of human nature, a warm and generous heart, and ready facilities for pastoral visitation. He immediately constructed a map of the town, divided it into districts, personally visited every house where he could gain access, and spoke to, and prayed with, the people. His mode, though novel, was fully justified by the result. He

* Mr. Harrison entered the ministry in 1804, and died in 1835.

commenced his philanthropic course at one end of a given street, and took the houses *seriatim*. Having obtained admission, he first asked one or two leading, but appropriate questions, fell upon his knees, offered up a short prayer, in which he invoked the Divine blessing upon the family ; and was in the next house similarly engaged, before those whom he had left had recovered from the surprise his visit had occasioned. Before he had completed his first tour, the congregation had so greatly increased that it became necessary to enlarge the chapel considerably, and the Society received a corresponding impulse.

CHAPTER IV.

RAGGED-CHAPELS, AFTER THE MODEL OF RAGGED-SCHOOLS, RECOMMENDED
—OBJECTION ANSWERED—SUNDAY-SCHOOLS SHOULD BE MORE SEDULOUSLY
CULTIVATED—TEACHERS SHOULD BE PIOUS, SHOULD APPLY THE PRINCIPLES
OF THE NEW TESTAMENT TO THE CONSCIENCES OF THE CHILDREN—SUNDAY-
SCHOOLS OUGHT TO BE REGARDED AS NURSERIES FOR THE CHURCH.

THE author, who has not been unobservant of the moral or political changes which have marked the latter period of our history, is free to record his unqualified approval of recent benevolent attempts to rescue from vice and degradation those children who, if not orphans, are fearfully neglected by their natural guardians, both as to education and morals. The institution of Ragged Schools forms a new era in our politico-moral history, and the philanthropy which these schools have called into activity is a fine feature in our national character. If they should not, in the stricter sense of the term, become nurseries for the church, they will unquestionably exert an immense amount of beneficial influence on the lower departments of social life; and where the rising generation acquire correct habits for the discharge of relative duties, it affords some ground to hope that the means which are employed to regulate the springs of social action, will hereafter become tributaries to the higher purposes and ends of life.

That a large amount of moral destitution exists in our great manufacturing towns and districts, is a fact which has already been shown, and which can scarcely admit of controversy; and that means, calculated to meet the frightful

and growing exigency, have yet to be devised, is scarcely less evident to those who have given the subject their serious consideration. In the densely-populated districts of North and South Staffordshire, Lancashire, Shropshire, and other mining localities, great masses of the working inhabitants, especially miners, never attend the ordinances of God's house, either in the church or out of it; and the too common excuse they urge is, the want of decent apparel in which to appear in the sanctuary of the Lord: for there is *low* caste as well as *high* caste, and pride, as an innate principle, runs through all the subordinations of society.

Now, without inquiring whether the ostensible be the real ground on which this serious negligence rests, the mere fact at once suggests the question, whether means suitable in their adaptation to such a state of circumstances might not, under the Divine blessing, be beneficially brought to bear on these voluntary outcasts of religious society. Witnessing, as the author has done, in many instances, the darkness and demoralisation of miners and their families, it has frequently occurred to him, that if places of worship, on the plan of the Ragged Schools were established in such localities, and suitable provision made for supplying them on the Sabbath-day with instruction in the elementary principles of Christianity, numbers of persons in these neglected and degenerate haunts of life, might, by personal invitation and persuasion, be induced to give their attendance and attention, and so obtain a

“ Knowledge of their sickness, and
A knowledge of their cure.”

The author anticipates an objection: viz., that the scheme of Ragged Chapels is much more feasible in theory than in practice, and therefore better intended than applied:

that the native predilections of the human character, in every department of life, set themselves in direct antagonism against whatever appears to be ostensibly invidious in social distinction, and, therefore, that the difficulties to be encountered at the outset would be almost, if not altogether insurmountable. But such an objection has no stable foundation in experiment. The scheme, to render it beneficially effective, would certainly require a suitable agency—a class of preachers well acquainted with the idioms of speech and habits of life of those to be instructed. But the Local Ministry, in every circuit, contains a greater or less number of persons who possess the precise adaptations for this class of labour; and who are, for the most part, men whose hearts beat responsively to the various forms of human woe,—whose warm and generous sympathies feed the flame of their zeal; and who are always in armour when the battle has to be fought.

This objection assumes a state of things which does not exist. It cannot be denied that there is a feeling in human nature which will not tamely yield to the intolerance of dogmatism; still, there are few men to be found on whom the law of kindness, if properly administered, does not make a favourable impression. The embassy of the Gospel is a mission of *entreaty*. Preachers are to *beseech* men to be reconciled to God. They are to use all means of *persuasion* that are compatible with moral principle; and to do all this in the spirit of meekness and love. How gentle is the Apostle's method with Roman sinners:—"I *beseech* you by the mercies of God." Some preachers assume the judicial functions of the Almighty, and consign to wholesale destruction all who do not practically adopt the recommendations offered to their acceptance: a course which has little affinity

with that "charity which hopeth all things, and suffereth long, and is kind."

Returning to our established institutions, the author directs the attention of his brethren in the Local Ministry to the subject of Sunday-schools, which he is deliberately of opinion are not improved to the extent of their capabilities, as auxiliaries from which to recruit the varied casualties which are continually taking place in our militant army. To the pious and reflecting mind few subjects present more materials for serious and interesting contemplation than a Sunday-school. Of the vast number of children now in course of training in our Sunday seminaries, it is more than probable, that, in ten or twelve years, a large majority will have entered upon manhood, and assumed relations imposing a variety of duties, and involving a series of responsibilities, which will have a most important bearing upon the eternal destinies of themselves and others, upon whom their influence will be brought to act. The seed of mental and moral action is frequently planted in a Sunday-school; and its luxuriant growth or otherwise will mainly depend on the amount and quality of cultivation which may be applied to the mental and moral powers. All the elements of the man are found in the child; and they gradually develop themselves as life advances. Childhood is the state in which the mind unfolds its capabilities,—the state when those habits are formed which constitute the happiness, or occasion the misery, of after life.

Without instituting and carrying out comparisons between secular and religious education, in their respective aims, influences, and results, it will be more in keeping with the design of this essay to confine our observations to the purposes, means, and end of Sabbath-school education. And here a question very

naturally presents itself to those who are not well acquainted with the constitution of Sabbath-schools : What is the chief end it is sought to secure in the instruction of the children of our Sunday-schools ? The ready answer is : The salvation of their souls. The paramount object of Sabbath-school institutions is to give the children clear conceptions of their danger and the means of deliverance ; their fall, and the principle of restoration ; their sickness, and mode of cure ; and then apply these things to their hearts with a view to practical purposes. No doubt, in the institution of Sabbath-schools, one branch of the general design was to teach gratuitously the art of reading to those poor children whose parents might not have the means of procuring for them such elementary instruction by payment. But this was evidently the subordinate branch. The chief design was the education and discipline of the soul. It was to train the infant mind for heaven. It was to call forth early convictions, and then direct them to the fountain of grace and mercy. It was to teach them the broad principles of the New Testament, and to show the application of those principles to the ordinary transactions of secular, social, and spiritual life.

The author conceives that no office takes higher rank in the scale of comparative importance than that of a Sunday-school teacher. Much as is the respect which is confessedly due to the pious minister of God's Word, yet his office, high and responsible as it is, must in some respects yield in magnitude and moment to that of training the youthful mind for heaven, and of applying to it those great principles of moral action which are to determine the destinies of both worlds. The Sunday-school teacher has not only to open the youthful mind, to apply a lever to its powers, and an impetus to its energies,—to teach the child how to regulate the springs of thought

and control the actions of life ; but the great secret of his influence, importance, and responsibility, is found in the direct personal access he has to minds in a state of formation, and which, like iron in a state of fusion, receive their mould, and form, and character, from the Sabbath-school teacher.

If it be an essential ingredient in the working economy of our Connexion, that class-leaders should possess a more perfect knowledge of the nature, claims, importance, and application of religion, and a more extensive experimental acquaintance with the high and holy spirit of regenerative Christianity, than those whom they are appointed to lead, it appears to be scarcely less necessary that those who are selected to educate the rising generation in our religious seminaries, should not only be competent to instruct, and apt to teach the rudiments of Scripture knowledge, but should themselves enjoy such a measure of the hallowed spirit of the Gospel, as to give them a quenchless desire to lead the children of their charge from Adam to Jesus Christ. Where is the parent, where is the philanthropist, where is the patriot, where is the Christian, who does not regard the effectual moral training of our youth, in connection with the application of Divine grace, as the greatest mainstay of our national security, and the stable foundation on which rests our hopes of future felicity ?

The very acceptance of office by a Sabbath-school teacher is itself a virtual pledge that he will use his best endeavours to carry out the objects to which that office has respect, as far, at least, as his abilities will aid him ; and the redemption of that pledge can only be secured by a conscientious discharge of the very important duties which that office involves. The mere inculcation of Scriptural knowledge is not a sufficient

discharge of those duties. If the teacher should stop here, the main object of Sunday-school education would be defeated. The author need scarcely say, that the value and importance of all knowledge, whether scientific or religious, is found, not so much in its acquirements, as in its use and application. It would avail us little to know the properties and value of light, if our eyes were closed in perpetual darkness. To know how to make bread, or any other aliment of life, will not feed the body: we must eat to live. The knowledge, indeed, of any branch of science, is only useful so far as it can be brought to bear with practical effect on those purposes of life to which it is applicable. So the mere communication of Scriptural knowledge will avail little for practical purposes, unless applied to the heart, and there be productive of the fruits of righteousness, which are by Christ to the glory of God.

The familiar aphorism of Solomon, "Train up a child in the way that he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it," contains a proposition sound in principle, effective in operation, and important in result, and is applicable alike to all periods, states, and circumstances of the world. It adapts itself to every constitution and form of society; it contains a commanding incentive to generous and indefatigable exertion; and it contemplates a result as encouraging in its prospects as it will be delightful in its ultimate consummation. Though short, it is very comprehensive. The object it proposes is the mental and moral cultivation of youth; the direction and control of the powers of the mind as they open and expand; the formation of character, and the regulation of the springs of thought and of action, with a view to fit them for this life, and especially for that which is to come.

If the educational apothegm be admissible, that, "As the twig is bent, the tree 's inclined," then the claims it embodies and the duties it inculcates are of the most serious importance in their application to the times in which we live. The present is confessedly a period of great moral danger. The principles of our young people are exposed to fearful assaults. Temptations, varied in form and powerful in attraction, throng the downward path of life, so that the safeguards of society in some of its departments are daringly threatened. In such circumstances it is natural to ask, What must be done? and the response is, The question is far more easily asked than answered. The author says, No; the answer is at hand: Implant in the rising generation the *principles* of Christianity, and the case is met, and met with effect. Teachers should pray *with* and *for* their children. They should inculcate the story of the Cross; endeavour to get the lintels of their hearts sprinkled with the blood of the Pascal Lamb. They should lay siege to their hearts, blockade them at every avenue, and cease not the assault until they have secured a victory.

Sunday-schools ought to be viewed as religious nurseries, out of which to transplant saplings into the Church of Christ, both for its use and ornament; to fill up our numerical vacancies; to supply the places of those whom death mows down or Providence removes; so that the children taught in our Sunday-schools might to come forth from those seminaries as practical illustrations of spiritual Christianity in its power and application.

CHAPTER V.

REVIVALS OF RELIGION ESSENTIAL TO PROSPERITY — EARLY METHODISM PROMOTED IN ITS GROWTH AND SPIRITUALITY BY REVIVALS—REVIVAL SERVICES DEFENDED—REVIVALISM THE SPIRIT OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENT—RECOMMENDED BY ISAIAH—CONCLUSION.

LASTLY, the author is exceedingly anxious to see a resuscitation, for practical purposes, of the zeal and enthusiasm which fed the flame of revivalism within these realms, when Methodism, in the palmy days of its unsophisticated simplicity, purity, and power, threw the reflected beams of spiritual illumination, which it had caught from the Sun of Righteousness,

“Athwart the gloom profound ;”

and accompanied the diffusion of that light with a diffusion of spiritual influence, which was only second in its effects to the moral revolution which shook the foundations of Central Europe just two centuries before. On this point the author addresses himself more immediately to the members of the Local Ministry ; because, with but few exceptions, the Itinerant Preachers virtually repudiate revival services as hoary relics of religious antiquity, as solitary specimens of the production of past ages, as obsolete memorials of a visionary fanaticism which has been quietly consigned to the tomb of the Wesleys.

The history of Methodism up to the death of its venerable and venerated Founder, is a running commentary on the doctrine of revivals. A warm and generous enthusiasm, fed

and regulated by Divine influence, and generating a well-tempered zeal and an indomitable energy, was the element brought to bear on the gloom and insensibility which, up to the middle of the eighteenth century, held in worse than Egyptian vassalage the population of these realms. The early preaching of the English Reformers evoked a spirit of inquiry, which no measures of human policy, however restrictive, could possibly repress. Salvation by faith was the simple spell which

“Broke the power of cancell’d sin,
And set the prisoner free.”

In modern Methodism, the simple but sterling piety of the fathers of the Connexion has been substituted by a formulary far more attractive in its external embellishments, but, nevertheless, cold and lifeless in operation and practical effect. Whatever is calculated to shock the prejudices of social refinement, is, by a questionable policy, carefully excluded from the pulpits of our circuit towns.

The author admits, that, in all revivals of the work of God, there is a breaking in upon that cold and calculating quietism which, in the prudential currency of the more erudite of the Travelling Preachers, “ought always to be preserved in the house and service of God.” He has, however, yet to learn, that stillness in social devotion is an essential element of genuine piety. The principle and practice of the New Testament seem to favour a contrary inference, and that inference is confirmed by analogy. The very notion of a revival of religion presupposes a previous state of lukewarmness and spiritual decline; and the means employed in reference to that state, to be effectual, must be adapted to the case on which they are brought to act. What are the effects usually brought about in revivals of religion? Why,

believers are quickened, backsliders are awakened, and sinners are brought to feel their lost condition. And where such results are produced by the Spirit of God operating on the human heart, shall there be no corresponding agency on the part of man? Shall believers be established, backsliders restored, and sinners saved, without effort and without emotion? When the three thousand, on the day of Pentecost, were pricked to the heart under the sifting, searching sermon of Peter, did they breathe out the simultaneous expression of alarm—"Men and brethren, what shall we do?"—in a cold and listless whisper? Why, it is said they were "pricked to the heart." They were in distress; they quailed under the wrath of God; and, under such circumstances, would they be likely to put a violent restraint upon their feelings? Again, will the recipients of God's favour—those who have exchanged grace for nature, light for darkness, liberty for bondage, happiness for misery, heaven for hell—exhibit no excitement, no rapture, no ecstasy? What! shall the

"Feast of reason and flow of soul"

be confined to philosophers and poets? To argue thus is to contravene the purposes of the Almighty. It is to thwart the genius, to destroy the constitution, and to deny the power of vital Christianity. It is to substitute an orthodox formula for the transforming influence of inwrought religion. It is to take the outward profession for the inward renovation. It is to put the sign for the thing signified. If the descriptive imagery of the New Testament means anything, it must mean all and everything which its language imports according to its ordinary acceptation. Wrestling, running, striving, fighting, must, at least, imply vigour, energy, spirit, determination in those who are candidates for a heavenly world.

The subjects of religion are absorbing subjects. Shall men look on the Saviour's dying love with indifference ; contemplate the opposite destinies of futurity without emotion ; realise the hallowed and hallowing influence of the Spirit of God on the heart unmoved and unaffected ? The man who can is little to be envied. The author feels with the poet, that on such themes

—————" 'Tis impious to be calm :

Passion is reason—transport temper here ! "

It is said, that, when the curses were uttered on Mount Ebal, and the blessings on its neighbouring mountain Gerizim, the whole body of the Jewish people uttered one simultaneous loud Amen ! Such an expression of concurrence, escaping at the same moment from more than half a million of voices, would be likely to rend the heavens, and pierce the upper skies. Was that enthusiasm, in its denunciated acceptation ? When the foundations of the second temple were laid, " all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, and the noise of their shouting was heard afar off." Was that fanaticism ? Will the full chorus of redemption's anthem, sung by a multitude which no man can number, each outvying each in the swell of grateful praise, and filling the entire amplitude of the upper world, be deemed fanaticism ? If so, then let such enthusiasm spread, until all mankind shall feel the prevalence of its power. Admitting that, in all great revivals of religion, there is much that carries the air of confusion, and sometimes of extravagance, yet even that derives an illustration from the laws of nature, seen in the operation of electric agencies ; where, although the thunder and lightning may disturb, the one the quiescence of the mind, the other the death-infected calm of the atmosphere, the rush and tempest of elemental strife are invariably followed by the vital

air being rendered more fit for the ordinary purposes of respiration. Let it not be imagined from these remarks that the author is an advocate for rant and confusion,—that he conceives a man's religion is to be tested by the strength of his lungs,—that shouting and uproar are to be taken as the standards of piety. He advocates no such things. He conceives that prosperity and advancement in religion require, in conjunction with Divine influence, zeal, energy, and *enthusiasm* (he employs the word in its best sense), on the part of the church, and that, though collective revivals of religion may produce some apparent confusion, the settled result is an increase of all the best elements of practical Christianity.

A telling illustration, to show the effect of this reasoning, is found in the history of Jacob. When the patriarch was on his return from Laban, he took up his lodging for the night under the broad canopy of heaven. During that memorable night he wrestled with an angel. On the precise nature of that conflict Revelation is silent ; but that the individual and the transaction were representative there can be little doubt. The struggle was severe and protracted. The morning dawned, and neither party appeared inclined to yield the palm to his adversary. The angel struggled, but in vain, to unloose himself from the firm grasp of his antagonist. At length he cried out, " Let me go, the day breaketh ! " Jacob, however, aware of his prevalence, replied, with the natural air of conscious advantage, " I will not let thee go unless thou bless me. " This was the stipulation, and with it the angel forthwith complied. He blessed him ; and Jacob let him go. The history relates to Jacob ; the application relates to us. Whatever else it may have been intended to teach, it evidently shows the power

and prevalence of prayer, when the heart is right with God, and when faith is determined to carry its purpose.

Let us see how far the course recommended by this beautiful and instructive illustration stands authorised by other parts of the Word of God. In Isaiah lxii. 6, 7, we have these remarkable words :—" Ye that make mention of the Lord, keep not silence, and give him no rest, till he establish and till he make Jerusalem a praise in the earth." Were this language uninspired, we should pause before we used it, as considering it far too presumptuous and familiar in its application to Jehovah ; but, when we recollect that it is the recommendation of a prophet to the praying and wrestling watchmen of Israel, for the prosperity and advancement of religion, we are encouraged to adopt the same course, in dependence upon the same aid, and with special reference to the same end. Ye, therefore, my brethren in the Local Ministry, who believe in Christ Jesus, whose hearts beat in unison for the prosperity of Zion, who prefer the peace of Jerusalem to your chief earthly joy, keep not silence : let your cry be heard in heaven ; let your prayers in union rise, as clouds of incense, to the throne of the Eternal. Cry aloud : lift up your voices, and lift them up with strength. Give him no rest. Besiege the throne of grace with efforts untired and untiring. Let repulse only quicken your energies, and encourage you to the renewal of action. Act thus, without abatement and without intermission, until he arise, and until he again make Jerusalem a praise in the earth.

In closing this Essay, the author feels that he should be guilty of a serious dereliction of duty, if he did not endeavour to enfix on his own mind, and on the minds of his fellow-labourers in the Local Ministry, some permanent impressions calculated to give an impetus to future exertions. The

position occupied by Local Preachers in the social state is one of trembling importance. Planted, as many of them are, in isolated situations, where the glimmerings of moral light, seen through the dim and obscure medium of clerical orthodoxy, are but just sufficient to make more visible the palpable darkness which broods around ; or where the *ignis fatuus* of dogmatic Puseyism, which, by one of the skilful contrivances of the fifteenth century, only illumines by side-lights the right and left hand paths of danger and destruction ; they are often the only lenses which converge the rays of heavenly illumination, and scatter those rays to enlighten the pathway to heaven. Their office, therefore, creates responsibilities, imposes duties, and involves results immeasurably momentous ; and the preacher who does not bring his reflex acts and motives under review, and connect the spirit and aims of his labours with the present and future interests and ends of Christianity, will have but very slender ground on which to rest his hopes of ministerial success. The mere fact of official designation in the Church of Christ, though it confers official authority and presumes an official fitness, does not necessarily infer the possession and retention of spiritual elements in an ascending and, therefore, improving ratio. Were the springs, motives, faculties, and powers of all the members of the Local Ministry uniformly actuated with a paramount reference to the salvation of souls, they would instrumentally effect a moral revolution within the sphere of their ministrations. Their influence would leaven that part of the community on which their piety and zeal were brought to act, and the application of moral principle would operate as an effectual countercheck to the accidents or impulses of human conduct, which are the natural consequences of unsettledness in religious character.

Permit me, my brethren, then, in conclusion, to ask—

HAVE WE UNIFORMLY ENDEAVOURED TO ELEVATE THE Cross? This should ever be the fulcrum and lever power of the Christian Ministry. Every subject of pulpit address derives the measure and spirit of its importance from the Cross of Christ. Christ crucified, the great theme of the Christian Ministry, judiciously opened and faithfully applied, is itself a complete body of divinity; a connected scheme of religious duties; a never-failing supply of motives, and an inexhaustible treasury of spiritual joy. Every part of the Gospel contains this master theme, *substantially*, if not *formally*. Every personal and relative obligation draws its quickening influence from this source. It is the centre of every circle,—the soul of every theme. It is the pivot around which all the dispensations of God revolve. It contains the principle and means of reconciliation, with the secret of their available application by man. The resolution, therefore, of the Apostle, “to know nothing”—to glory in nothing—“but the cross of Christ,” marks a soul deep in its convictions, and high in its elevations, on having found a remedy commensurate with the disease of sin, and only intent on magnifying Christ Jesus the Lord. It is said, that, when the Moravian missionaries first introduced the Gospel into Greenland, they called the attention of that benighted people to the nature and perfections of God, and his claims to their services. The Greenlanders heard with attention; but their hearts remained as frozen as their icy mountains. But when the missionaries exhibited before them the affecting scenes of Gethsemane and Calvary, their hearts melted with tenderness, contrition, and love. If the atonement be the warp of every pulpit address, the web will easily accommodate itself to the state of man. If Christ be

our polar star, our vessel will infallibly gain the port of safety.

HAS THE CONVERSION OF SOULS BEEN OUR PRIMARY OBJECT ? Or have we satisfied ourselves with a mere routine of external duties, just sufficient to cancel the formal obligations of official requirement ? No official responsibility is equal to that which is sustained by the minister of the Gospel. All the labours of a preacher of righteousness are pregnant with issues of a deathless character ; and, if his heart be filled with God, he will consider no labour too arduous, no difficulty too great, no sacrifice too costly, to adorn the shrine of his Saviour. What a memorable example is that which is supplied by the Apostle Paul. His heart was filled with the love of Christ, and his tongue was like a flame of seraphic fire. His ministry varied according to circumstances. Sometimes he preached publicly, and sometimes "from house to house ;" "warning every one night and day *with tears* ;" "keeping back nothing that was profitable ;" "declaring the whole counsel of God ;" and his whole ministerial life, extending over a period of more than thirty years, was so uniformly devoted to his labours, as to justify his appeal : "God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit, in the Gospel of his Son." Every Local Preacher should be like Chaucer's parson : "a living sermon of the truth he taught." Nothing is distributed to them, either in judgment or in mercy, upon the common scale of apportionment, or according to the general balance of Divine dispensations. Is it true, that the eternal destinies of our congregations are bound up with our own, and that we are responsible to God for the final misery of every soul lost through our means ? Is it not very probable, that St. Paul's "watchings often" were connected with the deep intensity of his ministerial solicitude ? Ministers, of all men, have the

greatest need to make David's petition the burden of their prayers : " Deliver me from blood-guiltiness, O God ! " especially the blood-guiltiness of lost souls. Scougal, in a sermon on this text, observes : " If a man should speak fire, blood, and smoke, if he had a voice like thunder, and an eye like lightning, he could not sufficiently represent the dreadful account that an unfaithful pastor will have to give."

ARE WE ANXIOUS FOR THE SPREAD OF THE GOSPEL, and do we contribute our largest amount of spirit and labour to promote that consummation ? And is that spirit and labour so disposed of in our public arrangements as to afford good reason to believe that they will aid the general result ? Do we pray much in secret for success in our spiritual labours ? and do we prefer spiritual prosperity to earthly joy ? Do we fix our spiritual residence near the fountain head of Divine influence, in order that we may obtain continuous supplies of light and consolation and power, in all their freshness and vigour, to enable us to discharge our functions with acceptance and success ? Do we seek to obtain, by all accessible means, a clearer and more extensive insight into the workings of human nature and the operations of Divine grace ? and, by frequently contrasting the blackness of sin with the brightness of holiness, do we employ all our moral ability to give effectual counteraction to the one, and increasing prominence to the other ? When the appointment of deacons relieved the Apostles from the burden of secular duties, it was to enable them to " give themselves continually to prayer and to the ministry of the word." It was said by the heavenly-minded Fletcher, that " his deepest and most sensible communications with God were enjoyed in those hours when the door of his closet was shut against human creatures as well as human cares." There is much reason to

fear that Luther's unyielding rule, to devote "*three of the best hours of each day*," in the privacy of his closet, to hold communion with God, and Bradford's custom, of *studying on his knees*, are much more extensively approved than adopted. It is true that Luther's rule is inapplicable to Local Preachers as a class; because, generally, their disposable time is very much restricted; but a settled habit of devotional feeling might be so closely interwoven with secular avocations as to give a preacher all the spiritual advantages which such a course might yield, without adopting its mechanical form. If the spirit of the ministry is a spirit of prayer, and if the violence which is necessary "to take the kingdom of heaven by force" is the violence of the oratory, then the duty of every preacher is plain, and the demand imperative. There is what Lord Shaftesbury denominated "*the heroic passion for saving souls*;" and how much it is to be desired that this passion were the rule of all the departments of the Christian Ministry!

THE END.

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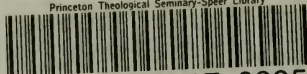
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